

MISCELLANIES:

O R

ESSAYS

Literary, Political, and Moral.

By the Reverend

Dr. JONATHAN SWIFT,

D. S. P. D.

GLASGOW:

Printed for ROBERT URIE.

MISCELLANEOUS



ESSAYS

BY THE REV. J. H. STODOLSKY

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

DR. JONATHAN SWIFT

D. D. D.

CLASCO

Printed by J. H. Stodolsky

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A
DISCOURSE
OF THE
Contests and Diffensions
BETWEEN THE
NOBLES and COMMONS
IN
ATHENS and ROME;

With the CONSEQUENCES they had up-
on both those STATES.

——— *Si tibi vera videtur,
Dede manus ; et, si falsa est, accingere contra.*
LUCRET.

Written in the Year 1701.



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T H E

CONTESTS and DISSENSIONS

I N

ATHENS and ROME*.

CHAP. I.

IT is agreed, that in all government there is an absolute and unlimited power, which naturally seems to be placed in the whole body, where-ever the executive part of it lies. This holds in the body natural; for where-ever we place the beginning of motion, whether from the

* This discourse is a kind of remonstrance in behalf of King William and his friends, against the proceedings of the House of Commons; and was published during the recess of parliament in the summer of 1701, with a view to engage them in milder measures when they should meet again.

At this time Lewis XIV. was making large strides towards universal monarchy; plots were carrying on at St. Germain; the Dutch had acknowledged the duke of Anjou as King of Spain, and King William was made extremely uneasy, by the violence with which many of his ministers and chief favourites were pursued by the Commons; the King, to appease their resentment, had made several changes in his ministry, and removed some of his most faithful servants

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head, or the heart, or the animal spirits in general, the body moves and acts by a consent of all its parts. This unlimited power, placed fundamentally in the body of the people, is what the best legislators of all ages have endeavoured, in their several schemes or institutions of government, to deposite in such hands as would preserve the people from rapine and oppression within, as well as violence from without. Most of them seem to agree in this, that it was a trust too great to be committed to any one man or assembly, and therefore they left the right still in the whole body; but the administration or executive part in the hands of the *one, the few, or the*

from places of the highest trust and dignity: this expedient, however, had proved ineffectual, and the Commons notwithstanding in their opposition; they began by impeaching William Bentick, Earl of Portland, Groom of the Stole; and proceeded to the impeachment of John Somers, Baron Somers of Evesham, first Lord-Keeper, afterwards Lord Chancellor; Edward Russel, Earl of Orford, Lord Treasurer of the Navy, and one of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty; and Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax, one of the Commissioners of the Treasury, and afterwards Chancellor of the Exchequer. Its general purport is to damp the warmth of the Commons, by shewing, that the measures they pursued had a direct tendency to bring on the tyranny, which they professed to oppose; and the particular cases of the impeached Lords are paralleled in Athenian characters. *Hawkes.*

This whole treatise is full of historical knowledge, and excellent reflections. It is not mixed with any improper fallacies of wit, or any light airs of humour; and, in point of style and learning, is equal, if not superior, to any of Swift's political works. *Orrery.*



M I S C E L L A N I E S.

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many, into which three powers all independent bodies of men seem naturally to divide; for by all I have read of those innumerable and petty commonwealths in Italy, Greece, and Sicily, as well as the great ones of Carthage and Rome, it seems to me, that a free people, met together, whether by *compact*, or *family government*, as soon as they fall into any acts of civil society, do of themselves divide into three powers. The first is that of some one eminent spirit, who, having signalized his valour and fortune in defence of his country; or by the practice of popular arts at home, comes to have great influence on the people, to grow their leader in warlike expeditions, and to preside, after a sort, in their civil assemblies; and this is grounded upon the principles of nature and common reason, which in all difficulties or dangers, where prudence or courage is required, do rather incite us to fly for counsel or assistance to a single person, than a multitude. The second natural division of power is of such men, who have acquired large possessions, and consequently dependencies, or descend from ancestors who have left them great inheritances, together with an hereditary authority. These easily uniting in thoughts and opinions, and acting in concert, begin to enter upon measures for securing their properties, which are best upheld

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by preparing against invasions from abroad, and maintaining peace at home; this commences a great council or senate of nobles for the weighty affairs of the nation. The last division is of the mass or body of the people, whose part of power is great and indisputable, whenever they can unite either collectively, or by deputation, to exert it. Now, the three forms of government, so generally known in the schools, differ only by the civil administration being placed in the hands of one, or sometimes two, (as in Sparta) who were called *Kings*; or in a senate, who were called the *Nobles*: or in the people collective or representative, who may be called the *Commons*. Each of these had frequently the executive power in Greece, and sometimes in Rome: but the power in the last resort was always meant by legislators to be held in balance among all three. And it will be an eternal rule in politics among every free people, that there is a balance of power to be carefully held by every state within itself, as well as among several states with each other.

The true meaning of a balance of power, either without or within a state, is best conceived by considering, what the nature of a balance is. It supposes three things: First, the part which is held, together with the hand that holds it; and then the two scales, with whatever is weighed

therein. Now, consider several states in a neighbourhood ; in order to preserve peace between these states, it is necessary they should be formed into a balance, whereof one or more are to be director, who are to divide the rest into scales, and upon occasion remove from one into the other, or else fall with their own weight into the lightest ; so in a state within itself, the balance must be held by a third hand, who is to deal the remaining power with the utmost exactness into the several scales. Now, it is not necessary, that the power should be equally divided between these three ; for the balance may be held by the weakest, who, by his address and conduct, removing from either scale, and adding of his own, may keep the scales duly poised. Such was that of the two Kings of Sparta, the consular power in Rome, that of the kings of Media before the reign of Cyrus, as represented by Xenophon ; and that of the several limited states in the Gothic institution.

When the balance is broken, whether by the negligence, folly, or weakness of the hand that held it, or by mighty weights fallen into either scale, the power will never continue long in equal division between the two remaining parties, but, till the balance is fixed anew, will run entirely into one. This gives the truest account of

what is understood in the most antient and approved Greek authors by the word *tyranny*, which is not meant for the seizing of the uncontrolled or absolute power into the hands of a single person, (as many superficial men have grossly mistaken,) but for the breaking of the balance by whatever hand, and leaving the power wholly in one scale; for *tyranny* and *usurpation* in a state are by no means confined to any number, as might easily appear from examples enough; and because the point is material, I shall cite a few to prove it.

The Romans *, having sent to Athens, and the Greek cities of Italy, for the copies of the best laws, chose ten legislators to put them into form, and during the exercise of their office, suspended the consular power, leaving the administration of affairs in their hands. These very men, though chosen for such a work, as the digesting a body of laws for the government of a free state, did immediately usurp arbitrary power; ran into all the forms of it, had their guards and spies after the practice of the tyrants of those ages, affected kingly state, destroyed the nobles, and oppressed the people; one of them proceeded so far, as to endeavour to force a lady of great virtue: the very crime, which gave occasion to the expulsion of the regal power but sixty years be-

* Dionys. Hal. lib. 10.

fore, as this attempt did to that of the Decemviri

The Ephori in Sparta were at first only certain persons deputed by the kings to judge in civil matters, while *they* were employed in the wars. These men, at several times, usurped the absolute authority, and were as cruel tyrants, as any in their age.

Soon * after the unfortunate expedition into Sicily, the Athenians chose four hundred men for the administration of affairs, who became a body of tyrants, and were called, in the language of those ages, an *oligarchy*, or tyranny of the few; under which hateful denomination they were soon after deposed in great rage by the people.

When Athens † was subdued by *Lysander*, he appointed thirty men for the administration of that city, who immediately fell into the rankest tyranny: but this was not all; for conceiving their power not founded on a *basis* large enough, they admitted three thousand into a share of the government: and thus fortified, became the cruellest tyranny upon record. They murdered in cold blood great numbers of the best men, without any provocation, from the mere lust of cruelty, like Nero or Caligula. This was such a

* Thucyd. lib. 8.

† Xenoph. de Rebus Græc. lib. 2.

number of tyrants together, as amounted to near a third part of the whole city; for Xenophon tells us*, that the city contained about ten thousand houses; and allowing one man to every house, who could have any share in the government, (the rest consisting of women, children, and servants) and making other obvious abatements, these tyrants, if they had been careful to adhere together, might have been a majority even of the people collective.

In the time of the second Punic war †, the balance of power in Carthage was got on the side of the people, and this to a degree, that some authors reckon the government to have been then among them *a dominatio plebis*, or *tyranny of the commons*; which it seems they were at all times apt to fall into, and was at last among the causes, that ruined their state: and the frequent murders of their generals, which Diodorus ‡ tells us was grown to an established custom among them, may be another instance, that tyranny is not confined to numbers.

I shall mention but one example more among a great number, that might be produced; it is related by the author last cited §. The orators

* Memorab. lib. 3.

† Polyb. Frag. lib. 6.

‡ Lib. 20.

§ Lib. 15.

of the people at Argos (whether you will stile them in modern phrase, *great speakers of the house*; or only, in general, representatives of the people collective) stirred up the commons against the nobles, of whom 1600 were murdered at once; and at last the orators themselves, because they left off their accusations, or, to speak intelligibly, because they *withdrew their impeachments*; having, it seems, raised a spirit they were not able to lay. And this last circumstance, as cases have lately stood, may perhaps be worth noting.

From what hath been already advanced, several conclusions may be drawn:

1st, That a mixed government partaking of the known forms received in the schools is by no means of Gothic invention, but hath place in nature and reason, seems very well to agree with the sentiments of most legislators, and to have been followed in most states, whether they have appeared under the name of monarchies, aristocracies, or democracies; for not to mention the several republics of this composition in Gaul and Germany, described by Caesar and Tacitus; Polybius tells us, the best government is that, which consists of three forms, *regno, optimatum, et populi imperio* *; which may be fairly translated,

* Fragm. lib. 6.

the *King, Lords, and Commons*. Such was that of Sparta, in its primitive institution by Lycurgus; who observing the corruptions and depravations, to which every of these was subject, compounded his scheme out of all; so that it was made up of *reges, seniores, et populus*. Such also was the state of Rome under its consuls: and the author tells us, that the Romans fell upon this model purely by chance, (which I take to have been nature and common reason;) but the Spartans by thought and design. And such at Carthage was the *summa reipublicae*†, or power in the last resort; for they had their kings called *juffetes*, and a Senate which had the power of *nobles*, and the people had a share established too.

2dly, It will follow, that those reasoners who employ so much of their zeal, their wit, and their leisure for the upholding the balance of power in Christendom, at the same time that by their practices they are endeavouring to destroy it at home, are not such mighty patriots, or so much in the true interest of their country, as they would affect to be thought; but seem to be employed like a man, who pulls down a house with his right hand what he has been building with his left.

† Fragm. lib. 6.

3dly, This makes appear the error of those who think it an uncontrollable maxim, that power is always safer lodged in many hands than one: for if these many hands be made up only from one of the three divisions before mentioned, it is plain from those examples already produced, and easy to be paralleled in other ages and countries, that they are as capable of enslaving the nation, and of acting all manner of tyranny and oppression, as it is possible for a single person to be, though we should not suppose their number not only to be of four or five hundred, but above three thousand.

Again, It is manifest from what has been said, that in order to preserve the balance in a mixed state, the limits of power deposited with each party ought to be ascertained and generally known. The defect of this is the cause, that introduces those strugglings in a state about *prerogative* and *liberty*, about encroachments of the *few* upon the rights of the *many*, and of the *many* upon the privileges of the *few*, which ever did, and ever will conclude in a tyranny; first either of the *few*, or the *many*, but at last infallibly of a single person: for which ever of the three divisions in a state is upon the scramble for more power than its own, (as one or other of them generally is) unless due care be taken by

the other two, upon every new question that arises, they will be sure to decide in favour of themselves, talk much of inherent right; they will nourish up a dormant power, and reserve privileges *in petto*, to exert upon occasions, to serve expedients, and to urge upon necessities; they will make large demands, and scanty concessions, ever coming off considerable gainers; thus at length the balance is broke, and tyranny let in; from which door of the three it matters not.

To pretend to a *declarative* right upon any occasion whatsoever, is little less than to make use of the whole power; that is, to declare an opinion to be law, which has always been contested, or perhaps never started at all before such an incident brought it on the stage. Not to consent to the enacting of such a law, which has no view besides the general good, unless another law shall at the same time pass, with no other view but that of advancing the power of one party alone; what is this but to claim a positive voice, as well as a negative? To pretend that great changes * and alienations of property have creat-

* This seems to allude to a practice of the house of Commons called *Tacking*: when they suspected that a favourite bill would be rejected, they tacked it to a money-bill; and as it was not possible to proceed without the supply, and

ed new and great dependencies, and consequently new additions of power, as some reasoners have done, is a most dangerous tenet. If dominion must follow property, let it follow in the same place; for change in property through the bulk of a nation makes slow marches, and its due power always attends it. To conclude, that whatever attempt is begun by an assembly, ought to be pursued to the end, without regard to the greatest incidents that may happen to alter the case; to count it mean, and below the *dignity of a house*, to quit a prosecution; to resolve upon a conclusion before it is possible to be apprised of the premisses: to act thus, I say, is to affect not only absolute power, but infallibility too. Yet such unaccountable proceedings as these have popular assemblies engaged in, for want of fixing the due limits of *power* and *privilege*.

Great changes may indeed be made in a government, yet the form continue, and the balance be held: but large intervals of time must pass between every such innovation, enough to melt down and make it of a piece with the constitution. Such, we are told, were the proceedings of Solon, when he modelled anew the Athenian

as it became necessary to reject or receive both the bills together, this expedient perfectly answered its purpose.—
Hawkes.

commonwealth; and what convulsions in our own, as well as other states, have been bred by a neglect of this rule, is fresh and notorious enough: it is too soon in all conscience to repeat this error again.

Having shewn, that there is a natural balance of power in all free states, and how it hath been divided, sometimes by the people themselves, as in Rome, at others by the institutions of the legislators, as in the several states of Greece and Sicily; the next thing is to examine, what methods have been taken to break or overthrow this balance, which every one of the three parties hath continually endeavoured, as opportunities have served; as might appear from the stories of most ages and countries: for absolute power in a particular state, is of the same nature with universal monarchy in several states adjoining to each other. So endless and exorbitant are the desires of men, whether considered in their persons or their states, that they will grasp at all, and can form no scheme of perfect happiness with less. Ever since men have been united into governments, the hopes and endeavours after universal monarchy have been bandied among them, from the reign of Ninus to this of the Most Christian King; in which pursuits commonwealths have had their share, as well as monarchs: so the

Athenians, the Spartans, Thebans, and the Achæians, did several times aim at the universal monarchy of Greece: so the commonwealths of Carthage and Rome affected the universal monarchy of the then known world. In like manner hath absolute power been pursued by the several parties of each particular state; wherein single persons have met with most success, though the endeavours of the *few* and the *many* have been frequent enough: yet being neither so uniform in their designs, nor so direct in their views, they neither could manage nor maintain the power they had got: but were ever deceived by the popularity and ambition of some single person. So that it will be always a wrong step in policy, for the Nobles or Commons to carry their endeavours after power so far, as to overthrow the balance; and it would be enough to damp their warmth in such pursuits, if they could once reflect, that in such a course they will be sure to run upon the very rock, that they meant to avoid: which, I suppose, they would have us think, is the tyranny of a single person.

Many examples might be produced of the endeavours of each of these three rivals after absolute power; but I shall suit my discourse to the time I am writing in, and relate only such dissensions in Greece and Rome, between the Nobles

and Commons, with the consequences of them, wherein the latter were the aggressors.

I shall begin with Greece, where my observations shall be confined to Athens, though several instances might be brought from other states thereof.

C H A P. II.

Of the dissensions in ATHENS, between the few and the many.

TH E S E U S is the first, who is recorded with any appearance of truth to have brought the Grecians from a barbarous manner of life, among scattered villages, into cities; and to have established the *popular state* in Athens, assigning to himself the guardianship of the laws and chief command in war. He was forced after some time to leave the Athenians to their own measures upon account of their seditious temper, which ever continued with them, till the final dissolution of their government by the Romans. It seems, the country about Attica was the most barren of any in Greece; through which means it happened, that the natives were never expelled by the fury of invaders, (who thought it not worth a

contest) but continued alway Aborigenes; and therefore retained through all revolutions a tincture of that turbulent spirit, wherewith their government began. This institution of Theseus appears to have been rather a sort of mixed monarchy, than a popular state, and, for aught we know, might continue so during the series of kings till the death of Codrus. From this last prince Solon was said to be descended; who, finding the people engaged in two violent factions of the poor and the rich, and in great confusion thereupon; refusing the monarchy, which was offered him, chose rather to cast the government after another model, wherein he made due provisions for settling the balance of power, chusing a senate of four hundred, and disposing the magistracies and offices according to men's estates; leaving to the multitude their votes in electing, and the power of judging certain processes by appeal. This council of four hundred was chosen, one hundred out of each tribe, and seems to have been a body representative of the people, though the people collective reserved a share of power to themselves. It is a point of history perplexed enough; but thus much is certain, that the balance of power was provided for; else Pisistratus, called by authors the tyrant of Athens, could never have governed so peaceably, as he did, with-

out changing any of Solon's laws *. These several powers, together with that of the *archon* or chief magistrate, made up the form of government in Athens, at what time it began to appear upon the scene of action and story.

The first great man bred up under this institution was Miltiades, who lived about ninety years after Solon, and is reckoned to have been the first great captain, not only of Athens, but of all Greece. From the time of Miltiades to that of Phocion, who is looked upon as the last famous General of Athens, are about 130 years: after which they were subdued and insulted by Alexander's captains, and continued under several revolutions a small truckling state, of no name or reputation, till they fell with the rest of Greece under the power of the Romans.

During this period from Miltiades to Phocion, I shall trace the conduct of the Athenians with relation to their dissensions between the people and some of their generals; who, at that time, by their power and credit in the army, in a war-like commonwealth, and often supported by each other, were with the magistrates and other civil officers a sort of counterpoise to the power of the people, who, since the death of Solon, had already made great encroachments. What these

* Herodot. lib. 1.

diffensions were, how founded, and what the consequences of them, I shall briefly and impartially relate.

I must here premise, that the Nobles in Athens were not at this time a corporate assembly, that I can gather; therefore the resentments of the Commons were usually turned against particular persons, and by way of articles of impeachment. Whereas the commons in Rome, and some other states, as will appear in a proper place, though they followed this method upon occasion, yet generally pursued the enlargement of their power by more set quarrels of one entire assembly against another. However, the custom of particular impeachments being not limited to former ages, any more than that of general struggles and diffensions between fixed assemblies of Nobles and Commons, and the ruin of Greece having been owing to the former, as that of Rome was to the latter, I shall treat on both expressly; that those states, who are concerned in either (if at least there be any such now in the world) may, by observing the means and issues of former diffensions, learn whether the causes are alike in theirs; and if they find them to be so, may consider whether they ought not justly to apprehend the same effects.

To speak of every particular person impeach-

ed by the Commons of Athens, within the compass designed, would introduce the history of almost every great man they had among them: I shall therefore take notice only of six, who, living in that period of time when Athens was at the height of its glory, as indeed it could not be otherwise while such hands were at the helm, though *impeached for high crimes and misdemeanors, such as bribery, arbitrary proceedings, misapplying or embezzling public funds, ill conduct at sea*, and the like, were honoured and lamented by their country, as the preservers of it, and have had the veneration of all ages since paid justly to their memories.

Miltiades was one of the Athenian generals against the Persian power, and the famous victory at Marathon was chiefly owing to his valour and conduct. Being sent some time after to reduce the island Paros, he mistook a great fire at a distance for the fleet, and being no ways a match for them, set sail for Athens; at his arrival he was *impeached* by the Commons for treachery, though not able to appear by reason of his wounds, fined 30000 crowns, and died in prison. Though the consequences of this proceeding upon the affairs of Athens were no other than the untimely loss of so great and good a man, yet I could not forbear relating it.

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Their next great man was Aristides*. Besides the mighty service he had done his country in the wars, he was a person of the strictest justice, and best acquainted with the laws as well as forms of their government, so that he was in a manner Chancellor of Athens. This man, upon a slight and false accusation of *favouring arbitrary power*, was banished by *ostracism*; which rendered into modern English would signify, that they voted *he should be removed from their presence and council for ever*. But however, they had the wit to recal him, and to that action owed the preservation of their state by his future services. For it must be still confessed in behalf of the Athenian people, that they never conceived themselves perfectly infallible, nor arrived to the heights of *modern assemblies*, to make *obstinacy* confirm what *sudden heat* and *temerity* began. They thought it not below the dignity of an assembly to endeavour at correcting an ill step; at least to repent, though it often fell out too late.

Themistocles † was at first a commoner himself; it was he that raised the Athenians to get

* Lord Somers. He was the general patron of the *literati*, and the particular friend of Dr. Swift. *Orrery*.

† Earl of Orford. He had been considered in a manner as Lord High Admiral, the whole affairs of the navy having been committed to his charge. *Orrery*.

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their greatness at sea, which he thought to be the true and constant interest of that commonwealth; and the famous naval victory over the Persians at Salamis was owing to his conduct. It seems the people observed somewhat of haughtiness in his temper and behaviour, and therefore banished him for five years; but finding some slight matter of accusation against him, they sent to seize his person, and he hardly escaped to the Persian court; from whence, if the love of his country had not surmounted its base ingratitude to him, he had many invitations to return at the head of the Persian fleet, and take a terrible revenge: but he rather chose a voluntary death.

The people of Athens impeached Pericles * for *misapplying the publick revenues to his own private use*. He had been a person of great deservings

* Lord Halifax. He had a fine genius for poetry; and had employed his more youthful part of life in that science. He was distinguished by the name of Mouse Montague, having ridiculed, jointly with Mat. Prior, Mr. Dryden's famous poem of the Hind and Panther. The parody is drawn from Horace's fable of the city-mouse and country-mouse. But afterwards, upon Mr. Montague's promotion to the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, Prior, with a good-humoured indignation at seeing his friend preferred, and himself neglected, concludes an epistle, written in the year 1698, to Fleetwood Shepherd, Esq; with these three lines:

My friend Charles Montague's *préfer*'d,
Nor would I have it long observ'd;
That one *mouse* eats while t'other's starv'd. Orrery.

from the republic, was an *admirable speaker*, and very popular. *His accounts were confused, and he could not then give them up*, therefore merely to divert that difficulty, and the consequences of it, he was forced to engage his country in the Peloponnesian war, the longest that ever was known in Greece, and which ended in the utter ruin of Athens.

The same people, having resolved to subdue Sicily, sent a mighty fleet under the command of Nicias, Lysimachus, and Alcibiades; the two former, persons of age and experience; the last, a young man of noble birth, excellent education, and a plentiful fortune. A little before the fleet set sail, it seems one night the stone images of Mercury, placed in several parts of the city, were all pared in the face: this action the Athenians interpreted for a design of destroying the popular state; and Alcibiades, having been formerly noted for the like frolicks and excursions, was immediately accused of this. He, whether conscious of his innocence, or assured of the secrecy, offered to come to his trial before he went to his command; this the Athenians refused. But as soon as he was got to Sicily, they sent for him back, designing to take the advantage, and prosecute him in the absence of his friends, and of the army, where he was very powerful. It seems,

he understood the resentments of a popular assembly too well to trust them; and therefore, instead of returning, escaped to Sparta; where his desires of revenge prevailing over his love to his country, he became its greatest enemy. Meanwhile the Athenians before Sicily, by the death of one commander, and the superstition, weakness, perfect ill conduct of the other, were utterly destroyed, the whole fleet taken, and a miserable slaughter made of the army, whereof hardly one ever returned. Some time after this, Alcibiades was recalled upon his own conditions, by the necessities of the people, and made chief Commander at sea and land; but his Lieutenant engaging against his positive orders, and being beaten by Lysander, Alcibiades was again disgraced, and banished. However, the Athenians having lost all strength and heart since their misfortune at Sicily, and now deprived of the only person that was able to recover their losses, repent of their rashness, and endeavour in vain for his restoration; the Persian Lieutenant, to whose protection he fled, making him a sacrifice to the resentments of Lysander the general of the Lacedemonians, who now reduces all the dominions of the Athenians, takes the city, razes their walls, ruins their works, and changes the form of their government; which though again restored for some time by Thrasy-

bulus (as their walls were rebuilt by Conon) yet here we must date the fall of the Athenian greatness; the dominion and chief power in Greece from that period to the time of Alexander the Great, which was about fifty years, being divided between the Spartans and Thebans. Though Philip, Alexander's father (*the Most Christian King* of that age) had indeed some time before begun to break in upon the republics of Greece by contest or *bribery*: particularly *dealing large money among some popular orators*, by which he brought many of them, as the term of art was then, to Philippize.

In the time of Alexander and his captains, the Athenians were offered an opportunity of recovering their liberty, and being restored to their former state; but the wise turn they thought to give the matter, was by an impeachment and sacrifice of the author, to hinder the success. For, after the destruction of Thebes by Alexander, this Prince designing the conquest of Athens was prevented by Phocion* the Athenian General, then Ambassador from that state; who, by his great wisdom and skill at negotiations, diverted Alexander from his design, and restored the Athenians to his favour. The very same success he had with Anti-

* The Earl of Portland. *Orrery.*

pater after Alexander's death, at which time the government was new regulated by Solon's laws: but Polyperchon, in hatred to Phocion, having by order of the young King, whose governour he was, restored those whom Phocion had banished, the plot succeeded. Phocion was accused by popular orators, and put to death.

Thus was the most powerful commonwealth of all Greece, after great degeneracies from the institution of Solon, utterly destroyed by that rash, jealous, and inconstant humour of the people, which was never satisfied to see a general either *victorious* or *unfortunate*; such ill judges, as well as rewarders, have *popular assemblies* been, of those who best deserved from them.

Now, the circumstance, which makes these examples of more importance, is, that this very power of the people in Athens, claimed so confidently for an *inherent right*, and insisted on as the *undoubted privilege of an Athenian born*, was the rankest incroachment imaginable, and the grossest degeneracy from the form that Solon left them. In short, their government was grown into a *dominatio plebis*, or *tyranny of the people*, who, by degrees, had broke and overthrown the balance, which that legislator had very well fixed and provided for. This appears not only from what has been already said of that lawgiver, but

more manifestly from a passage in Diodorus; who tells us †, *That Antipater, one of Alexander's captains, abrogated the popular government (in Athens,) and restored the power of suffrages and magistracy to such only, as were worth two thousand drachmas; by which means, says he, that republic came to be [again] administered by the laws of Solon.* By this quotation it is manifest, that great author looked upon Solon's institution, and a popular government, to be two different things. And as for this restoration by Antipater, it had neither consequence nor continuance worth observing.

I might easily produce many more examples, but these are sufficient: and it may be worth the reader's time to reflect a little on the merits of the cause, as well as of the men, who had been thus dealt with by their country. I shall direct him no farther than by repeating, that Aristides was the most renowned by the people themselves for his *exact justice and knowlege in the law*; that Themistocles was a most fortunate admiral, and had got a *mighty victory over the great King of Persia's fleet*; that Pericles was an *able minister of state, an excellent orator, and a man of letters*: and lastly, that Phocion, besides the success of his arms, was also renowned for his *negotia-*

† Lib. 18.

tations abroad, having in an embassy brought the greatest monarch of the world at that time to the terms of an honourable peace, by which his country was preserved.

I shall conclude my remarks upon Athens with the character given us of that people by Polybius. “ About this time, says he, the Athenians were governed by two men; quite sunk in their affairs; had little or no commerce with the rest of Greece, and were become great reverencers of crowned heads.”

For, from the time of Alexander's captains till Greece was subdued by the Romans, to the latter part of which this description of Polybius falls in, Athens never produced one famous man either for councils or arms, or hardly for learning. And indeed it was a dark insipid period through all Greece; for except the Achaian league under Aratus and Philopaemen; and the endeavours of Agis and Cleomenes to restore the state of Sparta, so frequently harassed by tyrannies occasioned by the popular practices of the Ephori, there was very little worth recording. All which consequences may perhaps be justly imputed to this degeneracy of Athens.

C H A P. III.

Of the diffensions between the Patricians and Plebeians in Rome, with the consequences they had upon that state.

HA V I N G in the foregoing chapter confined myself to the proceedings of the commons only by the method of *impeachments* against particular persons, with the fatal effects they had upon the state of Athens, I shall now treat of the diffensions at Rome between the people and the collective body of the Patricians or Nobles. It is a large subject, but I shall draw it into as narrow a compass as I can.

As Greece, from the most antient accounts we have of it, was divided into several kingdoms, so was most part of Italy * into several petty commonwealths. And as those kings in Greece are said to have been deposed by their people upon the score of their arbitrary proceedings, so on the contrary the commonwealths of Italy were all swallowed up, and concluded in the tyranny of the Roman emperors. However, the differences

* Dionys. Halicar.

between those Grecian monarchies, and Italian republics, were not very great: for, by the accounts Homer gives us of those Grecian princes who came to the siege of Troy, as well as by several passages in the *Odysses*, it is manifest, that the power of these princes, in their several states, was much of a size with that of the kings in Sparta, the archon at Athens, the suffetes at Carthage, and the consuls in Rome; so that a limited and divided power seems to have been the most antient and inherent principles of both those people in matters of government. And such did that of Rome continue from the time of Romulus, though with some interruptions, to Julius Caesar, when it ended in the tyranny of a single person. During which period (not many years longer than from the Norman conquest to our age) the Commons were growing, by degrees, into power and property, gaining ground upon the Patricians, as it were, inch by inch, till at last they quite overturned the balance, leaving all doors open to the practices of popular and ambitious men, who destroyed the wisest republic, and enslaved the noblest people that ever entered upon the stage of the world. By what steps and degrees this was brought to pass shall be the subject of my present enquiry.

While Rome was governed by kings, the mo-

narchy was altogether elective. Romulus himself, when he had built the city, was declared King by the universal consent of the people, and by augury, which was there understood for divine appointment. Among other divisions he made of the people, one was into Patricians and Plebeians: the former were like the barons of England some time after the conquest; and the latter are also described to be almost exactly what our Commons were then. For they were dependants upon the Patricians, whom they chose patrons and protectors, to answer for their appearance, and defend them in any process; they also supplied their patrons with money in exchange for their protection. This custom of *patronage*, it seems, was very antient, and long practised among the Greeks.

Out of these Patricians Romulus chose an hundred to be a *senate*, or *grand council*, for advice and assistance to him in the administration. The senate therefore originally consisted all of *nobles*, and were of themselves a *standing council*, the *people* being only convoked upon such occasions, as by this institution of Romulus fell into their cognizance: those were to constitute magistrates, to give their voices for making laws, and to advise upon entering on a war. But the two former of these popular privileges were to

be confirmed by authority of the senate; and the last was only permitted at the King's pleasure. This was the utmost extent of power pretended to by the Commons in the time of Romulus; all the rest being divided between the King and the senate; the whole agreeing very nearly with the constitution of England for some centuries after the conquest.

After a year's *inter-regnum* from the death of Romulus, the senate, of their own authority, chose a successor, and a stranger, merely upon the fame of his virtue, without asking the consent of the Commons; which custom they likewise observed in the two following kings. But in the election of Tarquinius Priscus, the fifth King, we first here mentioned, that it was done *populi impetrata venia*; which indeed was but very reasonable for a free people to expect: though I cannot remember, in my little reading, by what incidents they were brought to advance so great a step. However it were, this Prince in gratitude to the people, by whose consent he was chosen, elected a hundred senators out of the commons, whose number, with former additions, was now amounted to three hundred.

The people, having once discovered their own strength, did soon take occasion to exert it, and that by very great degrees. For at this King's

death, who was murdered by the sons of a former, being at a loss for a successor, Servius Tullius, a stranger, and of mean extraction, was chosen protector of the kingdom by the *people*, without the consent of the senate; at which the nobles being displeased, he wholly applied himself to gratify the Commons, and was by them declared and confirmed no longer Protector, but King.

This Prince first introduced the custom of giving freedom to servants, so as to become citizens of equal privileges with the rest, which very much contributed to increase the power of the *people*.

Thus in a very few years the commons proceeded so far, as to wrest even the power of choosing a king entirely out of the hands of the nobles; which was so great a leap, and caused such a convulsion and struggle in the state, that the constitution could not bear it; but civil dissensions arose, which immediately were followed by the tyranny of a single person, as this was by the utter subversion of the regal government, and by a settlement upon a new foundation. For the nobles, spighted at this indignity done them by the commons, firmly united in a body, deposed this Prince by plain force, and chose Tarquin the Proud, who running into all the forms and me-

thods of tyranny, after a cruel reign, was expelled by an universal concurrence of nobles and people, whom the miseries of his reign had reconciled.

When the consular government began, the balance of power between the nobles and plebeians was fixed anew: the two first Consuls were nobles, and confirmed by the commons; and a law was enacted, that no person should bear any magistracy in Rome, *injussu populi*, that is, *without consent of the Commons*.

In such turbulent times as these, many of the poorer citizens had contracted numerous debts either to the richer sort among themselves, or to senators and other nobles: and the case of debtors in Rome for the first four * centuries was, after the set time for payments, no choice but either to pay or be the creditor's slave. In this juncture the commons leave the city in mutiny and discontent, and will not return but upon condition to be acquitted of all their debts; and moreover, that certain magistrates be chosen yearly, whose business it shall be to defend the commons from injuries. These are called *Tribunes* of the people, their persons are held sacred and inviolable, and the people bind themselves

* Ab urbe condita. *From the building of the city.*

by oath never to abrogate the office. By these Tribunes, in process of time, the people were grossly imposed on, to serve the turns or occasions of revengeful or ambitious men, and to commit such exorbitances as could not end, but in the dissolution of the government.

These Tribunes, a year or two after their institution, kindled great dissensions between the nobles and the commons on the account of Coriolanus, a nobleman, whom the latter had *impeached*, and the consequences of whose impeachment (if I had not confined myself to Grecian examples for that part of my subject) had like to have been so fatal to their state. And from this time the Tribunes began a custom of accusing to the people whatever nobles they pleased, several of whom were banished or put to death in every age.

At this time the Romans were very much engaged in wars with their neighbouring states; but upon the least intervals of peace the quarrels between the nobles and the Plebeians would revive; and one of the most frequent subjects of their difference was the *conquered lands*, which the commons would fain have divided among the public; but the senate could not be brought to give their consent. For several of the wisest among the nobles began to apprehend the growing power of

the people; and therefore knowing what an accession thereof would accrue to them by such an addition of property, used all means to prevent it: for this the Appian family was most noted, and therefore most hated by the commons. One of them having made a speech against this division of lands, was impeached by the people of high treason, and a day appointed for his trial; but disdaining to make his defence, he chose rather the usual Roman remedy of killing himself: after whose death the commons prevailed, and the lands were divided among them.

This point was no sooner gained, but new dissensions began: for the plebeians would fain have a law enacted, to lay all mens rights and privileges upon the same level; and to enlarge the power of every magistrate within his own jurisdiction, as much as that of the consuls. The tribunes also obtained to have their number doubled, which before was five: and the author tells us*, that their insolence and power increased with their number, and the seditions were also doubled with it.

By the beginning of the fourth century from the building of Rome, the tribunes proceeded so far in the name of the commons, as to accuse

* Dionys. Halicar.

and fine the consuls themselves, who represented the kingly power. And the senate observing, how in all contentions they were forced to yield to the tribunes and people, thought it their wisest course to give way also to time; therefore a decree was made to send ambassadors to Athens, and to the other Grecian commonwealths planted in that part of Italy called Grecia Major, to make a collection of the best laws; out of which, and some of their own, a new complete body of law was formed, afterwards known by the name of the *laws of the twelve tables*.

To digest these laws into order ten men were chosen, and the administration of all affairs left in their hands; what use they made of it has been already shewn. It was certainly a great revolution, produced entirely by the many unjust encroachments of the people; and might have wholly changed the fate of Rome, if the folly and vice of those, who were chiefly concerned, could have suffered it to take root.

A few years after, the commons made farther advances on the power of the nobles; demanding among the rest that the consulship, which hitherto had only been disposed to the former, should now lie in common to the pretensions of any Roman whatsoever. This, though it failed at

present, yet afterwards obtained, and was a mighty step to the ruin of the commonwealth.

What I have hitherto said of Rome, has been chiefly collected out of that exact and diligent writer Dionysius Halicarnasseus, whose history, through the injury of time, reaches no farther than to the beginning of the fourth century after the building of Rome. The rest I shall supply from other authors; though I do not think it necessary to deduce this matter any further so very particularly, as I have hitherto done.

To point at what time the balance of power was most equally held between the *Lords* and *Commons* in Rome, would perhaps admit a controversy. Polybius tells us *, that in the second Punic war the Carthaginians were declining, because the balance was got too much on their side of the people; whereas the Romans were in the greatest vigour by the power remaining in the senate: yet this was between two and three hundred years after the period Dionysius ends with; in which time the commons had made several further acquisitions. This however must be granted, that, till about the middle of the fourth century, when the senate appeared resolute at any time upon exerting their authority, and adher-

* Fragm. lib. 6.

ing closely together, they did often carry their point. Besides, it is observed by the best authors†, that in all the quarrels and tumults at Rome, from the expulsion of the kings, though the people frequently proceeded to rude contumelious language, and sometimes so far as to pull and hale one another about the Forum, yet no blood was ever drawn in any popular commotions, till the time of the Gracchi: however, I am of opinion, that the balance had begun many years before to lean to the popular side. But this default was corrected, partly by the principle just mentioned, of never drawing blood in a tumult; partly by the warlike genius of the people, which in those ages was almost perpetually employed; and partly by their great Commanders, who by the credit they had in their armies fell into the scales as a futher counterpoise to the growing power of the people. Besides, Polybius, who lived in the time of Scipio Africanus the younger, had the same apprehensions of the continual encroachments made by the commons; and being a person of as great abilities, and as much sagacity, as any of his age, from observing the corruptions, which, he says, had already entered into the Roman constitution, did very nearly foretel

† Dionys. Halicar. Plutarch, etc.

what would be the issue of them. His words are very remarkable, and with little addition may be rendered to this purpose. "That those abuses
 " and corruptions, which in time destroy a govern-
 " ment, are sown along with the very seeds of
 " it, and both grow up together; and that as
 " rust eats away iron, and worms devour wood,
 " and that both are a sort of plagues born and
 " bred along with the substance they destroy;
 " so with every form and scheme of government
 " that man can invent, some vice or corruption
 " creeps in with the very institution, which
 " grows up along with, and at last destroys it *."

The same author, in another place †, ventures so far as to guess at the particular fate, which would attend the Roman government. He says, its ruin would arise from the popular tumults, which would introduce a *dominatio plebis*, or tyranny of the people; wherein it is certain he had reason, and therefore might have adventured to pursue his conjectures so far, as to the consequences of a popular tyranny, which, as perpetual experience teaches, never fails to be followed by the arbitrary government of a single person.

About the middle of the fourth century from the building of Rome, it was declared lawful for

* Lib. 5

† Fragm. lib. 6.

nobles and *plebeians* to inter-marry; which custom, among many other states, has proved the most effectual means to ruin the former, and raise the latter.

And now the greatest employments in the state were, one after another, by laws forcibly enacted by the *commons*, made free to the people, the Consulship itself, the office of Censor, that of the Quæstors or Commissioners of the Treasury, the office of Praetor or Chief Justice, the Priesthood, and even that of Dictator: the senate, after long opposition, yielding merely for present quiet to the continual urging clamours of the *commons*, and of the *tribunes* their advocates. A law was likewise enacted, that the *plebisciti*, or a vote of the house of Commons, should be of universal obligation; nay, in time the method of enacting laws was wholly inverted; for whereas the senate used of old to confirm the *plebiscita*, the people did at last, as they pleased, confirm or disannul the *senatusconsulta* *.

Appius Claudius brought in a custom of admitting to the senate the sons of freed men, or of such who had once been slaves; by which, and succeeding alterations of the like nature, that great council degenerated into a most corrupt and

* Dionys. lib. 2.

factionous body of men, divided against itself; and its authority became despised.

The century and half following, to the end of the third punic war by the destruction of Carthage, was a very busy period at Rome; the intervals between every war being so short, that the *tribunes* and *people* had hardly leisure or breath to engage in domestic dissensions: however, the little time they could spare, was generally employed the same way. So Terentius Leo, a *tribune*, is recorded to have basely prostituted the privileges of a *Roman* citizen, in perfect spite to the *nobles*. So the great African Scipio, and his brother, after all their mighty services, were impeached by an ungrateful *commons*.

However, the warlike genius of the people, and continual employment they had for it, served to divert this humour from running into a head, till the age of the Gracchi.

These persons, entering the scene in the time of a full peace, fell violently upon advancing the power of the people by reducing into practice all those encroachments, which they had been so many years gaining. There were at that time certain *conquered lands* to be divided, beside a *great private estate left by a king*: these the *tribunes*, by procurement of the elder Gracchus, declared by their legislative authority, were not to be dispos-

ed of by the *nobles*, but by the *commons* only. The younger brother pursued the same design; and besides, obtained a law, that all Italians should vote at election, as well as the citizens of Rome: in short, the whole endeavours of them both perpetually turned upon retrenching the *nobles* authority in all things, but especially in the matter of *judicature*. And though they both lost their lives in those pursuits, yet they traced out such ways as were afterwards followed by Marius, Sylla, Pompey, and Caesar, to the ruin of the Roman freedom and greatness.

For in the time of Marius, Saturninus a tribune procured a law, that the senate should be bound by oath to agree to whatever the people would enact: and Marius himself, while he was in that office of tribune, is recorded to have, with great industry, used all endeavours for depressing the *nobles*, and raising the people, particularly for cramping the former in their *power of judicature*, which was *their most inherent right*.

Sylla by the same measures became absolute tyrant of Rome: he added three hundred commons to the senate, which perplexed the power of the whole order, and rendered it ineffectual; then flinging off the mask, he abolished the office of

tribune, as being only a scaffold to tyranny, whereof he had no further use.

As to Pompey and Caesar, Plutarch tells us, that their union for pulling down the *nobles* (by their credit with the people) was the cause of the civil war, which ended in the tyranny of the latter; both of them in their consulships having used all endeavours and occasions for sinking the authority of the *patricians*, and giving way to all encroachments of the people, wherein they expected best to find their account.

From this deduction of popular encroachments in Rome the reader will easily judge, how much the balance was fallen upon that side. Indeed by this time the very foundation was removed, and it was a moral impossibility, that the republic could subsist any longer; for the *commons* having usurped the offices of state, and trampled on the senate, there was no government left but a *dominatio plebis*. Let us therefore examine how they proceeded in this conjuncture.

I think it is an universal truth, that the people are much more dexterous at pulling down and setting up, than at preserving what is fixed; and they are not fonder of seizing more than their own, than they are of delivering it up again to the *worst bidder*, with their own into the bargain. For altho' in their corrupt notions of divine

worship, they are apt to multiply their gods; yet their earthly devotion is seldom paid to above one idol at a time, of their own creation, whose *oar* they pull with less murmuring and much more skill than when they *share the lading*, or even *hold the helm*.

The several provinces of the Roman empire were now governed by the great men of their state; those upon the frontiers with powerful armies either for conquest or defence. These governors, upon any designs of revenge or ambition, were sure to meet with a divided power at home, and therefore bent all their thoughts and applications to close in with the people, who were now by many degrees the stronger party. Two of the greatest spirits, that Rome ever produced, happened to live at the same, and to be engaged in the pursuit; and this at a conjuncture the most dangerous for such a contest: these were Pompey and Caesar, two stars of such a magnitude, that their *conjunction* was as likely to be fatal as their *opposition*.

The *tribunes* and people, having now subdued all competitors, began the last game of a prevalent populace, which is that of chusing themselves a *master*; while the nobles foresaw, and used all endeavours left them to prevent it. The people at first made Pompey their Admiral with

full power over all the Mediterranean, soon after Captain-General of all the Roman forces, and Governor of Asia. Pompey, on the other side, restored the office of *tribune*, which Sylla had put down; and in his Consulship procured a law for *examining into the miscarriages of men in office or command for twenty years past*. Many other examples of Pompey's popularity are left us on record, who was a perfect favourite of the people, and designed to be more; but his pretensions grow stale for want of a timely opportunity of introducing them upon the stage. For Caesar, with his legions in Gaul, was a perpetual check upon his designs; and in the arts of pleasing the people did soon after get many lengths beyond him. For he tells us himself, that the senate by a bold effort having made some severe decrees against his proceedings, and against the tribunes, these all left the city, and went over to his party, and consequently along with them the affections and interests of the people; which is further manifest from the accounts he gives us of the citizens in several towns mutinying against their commanders, and delivering both to his devotion. Besides, Caesar's public and avowed pretensions for beginning the civil war, were to restore the tribunes and the people oppressed (as he pretended) by the *nobles*.

This forced Pompey, against his inclinations, upon the necessity of changing sides, for fear of being forsaken by both; and of closing in with the senate and chief magistrates, by whom he was chosen General against Caesar.

Thus at length the *senate* (at least the primitive part of them, the *nobles*) under Pompey, and the *commons* under Caesar, came to a final decision of the long quarrels between them. For, I think, the ambition of private men did by no means begin or occasion this war; though civil dissensions never fail of introducing and spiring the ambition of private men; who thus become indeed the great instruments for deciding of such quarrels, and at last are sure to seize on the prize. But no man that sees a flock of vultures hovering over two armies ready to engage, can justly charge the blood drawn in the battle to them, though the carcases fall to their share. For while the balance of power is equally held, the ambition of private men, whether orators or great commanders, gives neither danger nor fear, nor can possibly enslave their country; but that once broken, the divided parties are forced to unite each to its head, under whose conduct or fortune one side is at first victorious, and at last both are slaves. And to put it past dispute, that this entire subversion of the Roman liberty and

constitution was altogether owing to those measures, which had broke the balance between the *patricians* and *plebeians*, whereof the ambition of particular men was but an effect and consequence, we need only consider, that when the uncorrupted part of the senate had, by the death of Caesar, made one great effort to restore their former state and liberty, the success did not answer their hopes, but that whole assembly was so sunk in its authority, that those patriots were forced to fly, and give way to the madness of the people, who by their own dispositions, stirred up with the harrangues of their orators, were now wholly bent upon single and despotic slavery. Else, how could such a profligate as Antony, or a boy of eighteen, like Octavius, ever dare to dream of giving law to such an empire and people? wherein the latter succeeded, and entailed the vilest tyranny, that heaven in its anger ever inflicted on a corrupt and poisoned people. And this with so little appearance at Caesar's death, that when Cicero wrote to Brutus, how he had prevailed by his credit with Octavius to promise him [Brutus] pardon and security for his person, that great Roman received the notice with the utmost indignity, and returned Cicero an answer yet upon record, full of the highest resentment and

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Here ended all shew or shadow of liberty in Rome. Here was the repository of all the wise contentions and struggles for power between the nobles and commons, lapped up safely in the bosom of a Nero and a Caligula, a Tiberius and a Domitian.

Let us now see from this deduction of particular impeachments, and general dissensions in Greece and Rome, what conclusions may naturally be formed for instruction of any other state, that may haply upon many points labour under the like circumstances.

C H A P. IV.

UPON the subject of *impeachments* we may observe, that the custom of accusing the *nobles* to the *people*, either by themselves, or their orators, (now styled an *impeachment in the name of the commons*) hath been very antient both in Greece and Rome, as well as Carthage; and therefore may seem to be the inherent right of a free people, nay, perhaps it is really so: but then it is to be considered, first, that this

custom was peculiar to republics, or such states where the administration lay principally in the hands of the commons, and ever raged more or less, according to their encroachments upon absolute power; having been always looked upon by the wisest men and best authors of those times, as an effect of licentiousness, and not of liberty, a distinction, which no multitude, either *represented* or *collective*, hath been at any time very nice in observing. However, perhaps this custom in popular states of impeaching particular men may seem to be nothing else, but the people's chusing upon occasion to exercise their own jurisdiction in person; as if a king of England should sit as chief justice in his court of King's Bench; which, they say, in former times he sometimes did. But in Sparta, which was called a kingly government, though the people were perfectly free, yet because the administration was in the two kings and the *ephori* with the assistance to the senate, we read of no impeachments by the people, nor was the process against great men, either upon account of ambition or ill conduct, though it reached sometimes to kings themselves, ever formed that way, as I can recollect, but only passed through those hands, where the administration lay. So likewise during the regal government in Rome, though it was instituted a

mixed monarchy, and the people made great advances in power, yet I do not remember to have read of one impeachment from the commons against a Patrician, until the consular state began, and the people had made great encroachments upon the administration.

Another thing to be considered is, that allowing this right of impeachment to be as inherent as they please, yet, if the commons have been perpetually mistaken in the merits of the causes and the persons, as well as in the consequences of such impeachments upon the peace of the state, we cannot conclude less, than that the commons in Greece and Rome (whatever they may be in other states) were by no means qualified either as prosecutors or judges in such matters; and therefore, that it would have been prudent, to have reserved these privileges dormant, never to be produced but upon very great and urgent occasions, where the state is in apparent danger, the universal body of the people in clamours against the administration, and no other remedy in view. But for a few popular orators or tribunes, upon the score of *personal piques*; or to employ the pride they conceive in seeing themselves at the head of a party; or as a method for advancement: or moved by certain powerful arguments that could make Demosthenes philippize: for such men, I

say, when the state would of itself gladly be quiet, and hath, besides, affairs of the last importance upon the anvil, to “ impeach Miltiades* after a
 “ great naval victory, for not pursuing the Persian fleet: to impeach Aristides, the person
 “ most versed among them in the knowledge and
 “ practice of their laws, for a blind suspicion of
 “ his acting in an arbitrary way (that is, as they
 “ expound it, nor in concert with the people:)
 “ to impeach Pericles, after all his services,
 “ for a few inconsiderable accounts; or to impeach Phocion, who had been guilty of no other crime but negotiating a treaty for the peace
 “ and the security of his country:” what could the continuance of such proceedings end in, but the utter discouragement of all virtuous actions and persons, and consequently in the ruin of a state? therefore the historians of those ages seldom fail to set this matter in all its lights, leaving us the highest and most honourable *ideas* of those persons, who suffered by the persecution of the people, together with the fatal consequences they had, and how the persecutors seldom failed to repent, when it was too late.

* Though in other passages Lord Orford's character is supposed to be drawn under the name of Themistocles, yet he seems to be represented by Miltiades here; for Themistocles was not impeached at all. See p. 20. *Hawkes*.

These impeachments perpetually falling upon many of the best men both in Greece and Rome, are a cloud of witnesses, and examples enough to discourage men of virtue and abilities from engaging in the service of the public; and help on the other side to introduce the ambitious, the covetous, the superficial, and the ill designing; who are as apt to be bold, and forward, and meddling, as the former are to be cautious, and modest, and reserved. This was so well known in Greece, that an eagerness after employments in the state was looked upon by wise men, as the worst title a man could set up; and made Plato say, *That if all men were as good as they ought, the quarrel in a commonwealth would be not as it is now, who should be ministers of state, but who should not be so.* And Socrates* is introduced by Xenophon severely chiding a friend of his for not entering into the public service, when he was every way qualified for it: such a backwardness there was at that time among good men to engage with an usurping people, and a set of *pragmatical ambitious orators*. And Diodorus tells us†, that when the *petalism* was erected at Syracuse, in imitation of the *ostracism* ‡ at Athens, it was so

* Lib. Memorab.

† Lib. 11.

‡ *Ostracism* was a kind of popular sentence to banishment passed against men whose personal influence, from whatever

notoriously levelled against all who had either birth or merit to recommend them, that whoever possessed either, withdrew for fear, and would have no concern in public affairs. So that the people themselves were forced to abrogate it for fear of bringing all things into confusion.

There is one thing more to be observed, wherein all the popular impeachments in Greece and Rome seem to have agreed; and that was, a notion they had of being concerned in *point of honour* to condemn whatever person they impeached, however frivolous the articles were, upon which they began, or however weak the surmises, whereon they were to proceed in their proofs. For, to conceive that the body of the people could be mistaken, was an indignity not to be imagined, till the consequences had convinced them, when it was past remedy. And I look upon this as a fate, to which all popular accusations are subject; tho' I should think that the saying, *Vox populi vox Dei*, ought to be under-

cause, was thought to render them dangerous to the state: the votes were giving by writing the name of the person on a shell, by the Greeks called *ὄστρακον*, and casting the shell into an urn.

Petalism was a sentence nearly of the same kind; and as *ostracism* was denominated from the shell, on which the name of the suspected party was written, *petalism* took its name from *πέταλον* a leaf, which the Syracusans used for the same purpose. *Hawkes*.

stood of the universal bent and current of a people, not of the *bare majority* of a few representatives, which is often procured by *little arts*, and great industry and application; wherein those, who engage in the pursuits of malice and revenge, are much more sedulous than such as would prevent them.

From what hath been deduced of the *diffensions* in Rome between the two bodies of Patricians and plebeians, several reflections may be made.

First, That when the balance of power is duly fixed in a state, nothing is more dangerous or unwise, than to give way to the *first steps* of popular encroachments; which is usually done either in hopes of procuring ease and quiet from some vexatious clamour, or else *made merchandize, and merely bought and sold*. This is breaking into a constitution to serve a present expedient, or supply a present exigency: the remedy of an empiric, to stifle the present pain, but with certain prospect of sudden and terrible returns. When a child grows easy and content by being humour-ed; and when a lover becomes satisfied by small compliances, without further pursuits; then expect to find popular assemblies content with small concessions. If there could be one single example be brought from the whole compass of history, of any one popular assembly, who after beginning

contend for power, ever sat down quietly with a certain share : or if one instance could be produced of a popular assembly, that ever knew, or proposed, or declared what share of power was their due; then might there be some hopes, that it were a matter to be adjusted by reasonings, by conferences, or debates: but since that all is manifestly otherwise, I see no other course to be taken in a settled state, than a steady constant resolution in those, to whom the rest of the balance is entrusted, never to give way so far to popular clamours, as to make the least breach in the constitution, through which a million of abuses and encroachments will certainly in time force their way.

Again, from this deduction it will not be difficult to gather and assign certain marks of popular encroachments; by observing of which, those who hold the balance in a state may judge of the degrees, and, by early remedies and application, put a stop to the fatal consequences that would otherwise ensue. What those marks are, hath been at large deduced, and need not be here repeated.

Another consequence is this: that (with all respect for popular assemblies be it spoken) it is hard to recollect one folly, infirmity, or vice, to which a single man is subjected, and from which a body

of commons, either collective or represented, can be wholly exempt. For, besides that they are composed of men, with all their infirmities about them, they have also the ill fortune to be generally led and influenced by the very worst among themselves, I mean, *popular orators, tribunes*, or as they are now styled, *great speakers, leading men*, and the like. From whence it comes to pass, that in their results we have sometimes found the same spirit of cruelty and revenge, of malice and pride, the same blindness, and obstinacy, and unsteadiness, the same ungovernable rage and anger, the same injustice, sophistry, and fraud, that ever lodged in the breast of any individual.

Again, in all free states the evil to be avoided is *tyranny*, that is to say, the *summa imperii*, or unlimited power solely in the hands of the *one*, the *few*, or the *many*. Now, we have shewn, that although most revolutions of government in Greece and Rome began with the tyranny of the people, yet they generally concluded in that of a single person; so that an usurping populace is its own *dupe*; a mere underworker, and a purchaser in trust for some single tyrant, whose state and power they advance to their own ruin, with as blind an instinct, as those worms that die with

weaving magnificent habits for beings of a superior nature to their own.

CHAP. V.

SOME reflections upon the late public proceedings among us, and that variety of factions into which we are still so intricately engaged, gave occasion to this discourse. I am not conscious, that I have forced one example, or put it into any other light than it appeared to me long before I had thought of producing it.

I cannot conclude without adding some particular remarks upon the present posture of affairs and dispositions in this kingdom.

The fate of empire is grown a common-place: that all forms of government having been instituted by man, must be mortal, like their authors, and have their periods of duration limited as well as those of private persons. This is a truth of vulgar knowledge and observation: but there are few, who turn their thoughts to examine how those diseases in a state are bred, that hasten its end; which would however be a very useful enquiry. For, though we cannot prolong the period of a commonwealth beyond the decree of heaven, or

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the date of its nature, any more than human life beyond the strength of the seminal virtue; yet we may manage a sickly constitution; and preserve a strong one; we may watch and prevent accidents; we may turn off a great blow from without, and purge away an ill humour that is lurking within: and by these, and other such methods, render a state long lived, though not immortal. Yet some physicians have thought, that if it were practicable to keep the several humours of the body in an exact equal balance of each with its opposite, it might be immortal, and so perhaps would a political body, if the balance of power could be always held exactly even. But, I doubt, this is as impossible in practice as the other.

It hath an appearance of fatality, and that the period of a state approacheth, when a concurrence of many circumstances, both within and without, unite towards its ruin: while the body of the people are either stupidly negligent, or else giving in with all their might to those very practices, that are working their destruction. To see whole bodies of men breaking a constitution by the very same errors, that so many have been broke before: to observe opposite parties, who can agree in nothing else, yet firmly united in such measures, as must certainly ruin their country: in short, to be encompassed with the greatest dangers from with-

out, to be torn by many virulent factions within; then to be secure and senseless under all this, and to make it the very least of our concern; these, and some others that might be named, appear to me to be the most likely symptoms in a state of a *sickness unto death*.

*Quod procul a nobis flectat fortuna gubernans:
Et ratio potius, quam res persuadeat ipsa.*

Lucret.

There are some conjunctures, wherein the death or dissolution of government is more lamentable in its consequences, than it would be in others. And, I think, a state can never arrive to its period in a more deplorable *crisis*, than at the time when some *prince in the neighbourhood*, of vast power and ambition, lies hovering like a vulture to devour, or, at least dismember its dying carcass; by which means it becomes only a province or acquisition to some mighty monarchy, without hopes of a resurrection.

I know very well, there is a set of sanguine tempers, who deride and ridicule, in the number of fopperies, all such apprehensions as these. They have it ready in their mouths, that the people of England are of a genius and temper never to admit slavery among them; and they are furnished

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with a great many commons-places upon that subject. But it seems to me that such discoursers do reason upon short views, and a very moderate compass of thought. For I think it a great error to count upon the genius of a nation as a standing argument in all ages, since there is hardly a spot of ground in Europe, where the inhabitants have not frequently and entirely changed their temper and genius. Neither can I see any reason, why the genius of a nation should be more fixed in the point of government, than in their morals, their learning, their religion, their common humour and conversation, their diet and their complexion; which do all notoriously vary almost in every age, and may every one of them have great effects upon mens notions of government.

Since the Norman conquest, the balance of power in England hath often varied, and sometimes been wholly overturned; the part which the commons had in it, (*that most disputed point*) in its original, progress, and extent, was, by their own confessions, but a very inconsiderable share. Generally speaking, they have been gaining ever since, though with frequent interruptions and slow progress. The abolishing of *villanage*, together with the custom introduced (or permitted) among the nobles of selling their lands in the reign of Henry the Seventh, was a mighty addition to the

power of the commons: yet I think a much greater happened in the time of his successor, at the dissolution of the abbeys; for this turned the *clergy* wholly out of the scale, who had so long filled it; and placed the *commons* in their stead; who in a few years became possessed of vast quantities of those and other lands by grant or purchase. About the middle of Q. Elizabeth's reign, I take the power between the nobles and the commons to have been in more equal balance, than it was ever before or since. But then or soon after arose a faction in England, which, under the name of *puritan*, began to grow popular by molding up their new schemes of religion with republican principles in government; and, gaining upon the *prerogative* as well as the *nobles*, under several denominations, for the space of about sixty years, did at last overthrow the constitution, and, according to the usual course of such revolutions, did introduce a tyranny, first of the people, and then of a single person.

In a short time after, the old government was revived. But the progress of affairs for almost thirty years, under the reigns of two princes *, is a subject of a very different nature: when the balance was in danger to be overturned by the

* Charles II. and James II.

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hands that held it, which was at last very seasonably prevented by the late revolution. However, as it is the talent of human nature to run from one extreme to another, so in a very few years we have made mighty leaps from prerogative heights into the depths of popularity, and I doubt to the very last degree that our constitution will bear. It were to be wished, that the most august assembly of the commons would please to form a *pandeet* of their own power and privileges, to be confirmed by the entire legislative authority, and that in as solemn a manner (if they please) as the *magna charta*. But to fix one foot of their compass wherever they think fit, and extend the other to such terrible lengths, without describing any circumference at all, is to leave us and themselves in a very uncertain state, and in a sort of *rotation*, that the author† of the *Oceana* never dreamed on. I believe the most hardy tribune

† Mr. James Harrington, some time in the service of King Charles I. after whose death he drew up and printed a form of popular government, entitled, *The commonwealth of Oceana*: he endeavoured likewise to promote this scheme by public discourses at a nightly meeting of several curious gentlemen in New-Palace Yard, Westminster. This club was called the *Rota*; and Mr. Henry Nevil, one of its members, proposed to the then House of Commons, that a third part of the senate should *rote* out by ballot every year, and be incapable of being elected again for three years to come. *Hawkes*.

will not venture to affirm at present, that any just fears of encroachment are given us from the regal power, or the *few*: and, is it then impossible to err on the other side? How far must we proceed, or where shall we stop? *The raging of the sea, and the madness of the people* are put together in holy writ; and it is God alone who can say to either, *Hitherto shalt thou pass, and no further.*

The balance of power in a limited state is of such absolute necessity, that Cromwell himself, before he had perfectly confirmed his tyranny, having some occasions for the appearance of a parliament, was forced to create and erect an entire new house of Lords, such as it was, for a counterpoise to the Commons. And indeed, considering the vileness of the clay, I have sometimes wondered, that no tribune of that age durst ever venture to ask the *potter*, *What dost thou make?* But it was then about the last act of popular usurpation, and *fate* or *Cromwell* had already prepared them for that of a single person.

I have been often amazed at the rude, passionate, and mistaken results which have at certain times fallen from great assemblies, both ancient and modern, and of other countries as well as our own. This gave me the opinion, I mentioned a while ago; that public conventions are liable

to all the infirmities, follies, and vices of private men. To which, if there be any exception, it must be of such assemblies, who act by *universal concert, upon public principles, and for public ends*; such as proceed upon debates without *unbecoming warmths, or influence from particular leaders and inflamers*; such whose members instead of *canvassing to procure majorities for their private opinons, are ready to comply with general sober results, though contrary to their own sentiments*. Whatever assemblies act by these and other methods of the like nature, must be allowed to be exempt from several imperfections, to which particular men are subjected. But I think the source of most mistakes and miscarriages in matters debated by public assemblies, ariseth from the influence of private persons upon great numbers, styled in common phrase, *leading men and parties*. And therefore when we sometimes meet a *few words* put together, which is called the *vote or resolution* of an assembly, and which we cannot possibly reconcile to *prudence or public good*, it is most charitable to conjecture, that such a vote has been conceived, and born, and bred in a private brain, afterwards raised and supported by an obsequious party, and then with usual methods confirmed by an *artificial* majority. For, let us suppose five hundred men, mixed in

point of sense and honesty, as usually assemblies are; and let us suppose these men proposing, debating, resolving, voting, according to the mere natural motions of their own little or much reason and understanding; I do allow, that abundance of indigested and abortive, many pernicious and foolish overtures would arise, and float a new minutes; but then they will die and disappear. Because, this must be said in behalf of human kind, that common sense and plain reason, while men are disengaged from acquired opinions, will ever have some general influence upon their minds; whereas the species of folly and vice are infinite, and so different in every individual, that they could never procure a majority, if other corruptions did not enter to prevent mens understandings, and misguide their wills.

To describe how parties are bred in an assembly, would be a work too difficult at present, and perhaps not altogether safe. *Periculosa plenum opus aleæ.* Whether those, who are leaders, usually arrive at that station more by a sort of instinct or secret composition of their nature, or influence of the stars, than by the possession of any great abilities, may be a point of much dispute: but when the leader is once fixed, there will never fail to be followers. And man is so apt to *imitate*, so much of the nature of *sheep*,

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imitatores, servum pecus, that whoever is so bold to give the first great leap over the heads of those about him, though he be the worst of the flock, shall be quickly followed by the rest. Besides, when parties are once formed, the stragglers look so ridiculous, and become so insignificant, that they have no other way, but to run into the herd, which at least will hide and protect them; and where to be much considered, requires only to be very violent.

But there is one circumstance with relation to parties, which I take to be of all others most pernicious in a state; and I would be glad any partizan would help me to a tolerable reason, that because Clodius and Curio happen to agree with me in a few singular notions, I must therefore blindly follow them in all: or to state it at best, that because Bibulus the *party man* is persuaded that Clodius and Curio do really propose the good of their country as their chief end; therefore Bibulus shall be wholly guided and governed by them in the means and measures towards it. Is it enough for Bibulus, and the rest of the herd, to say without further examining, *I am of the side with Claudius, or I vote for Curio?* are these proper methods to form and make up what they think fit to call the *united wisdom of the nation?* Is it not possible, that upon some occasion Clo-

dius may be bold and insolent, borne away by his passion, malicious, and revengeful? That Curio may be corrupt, and expose to sale his tongue and his pen? I conceive it far below the dignity both of human nature, and human reason, to be engaged in any party, the most plausible soever, upon such servile conditions.

This influence of any *one* upon *many*, which seems to be as great in a people *represented*, as it was of old in the commons *collective*, together with the consequences it hath had upon the legislature, hath given me frequent occasion to reflect upon what Diodorus tells us of one Charondas, a lawgiver to the Sybarites, an antient people of Italy, who was so averse from all innovation, especially when it was to proceed from particular persons, (and, I suppose, that he might put it out of the power of men, fond of their own notions, to disturb the constitution at their pleasures, by advancing private schemes) that he provided a statute, that whoever proposed any alteration to be made, should step out and do it with a rope about his neck: if the matter proposed were generally approved, then it should pass into a law; if it went in the negative, the proposer to be immediately *hanged*. Great ministers may talk of what projects they please; but I am deceived, if a more effectual one could

ever be found for *taking off* (as the present phrase is) those hot, unquiet spirits, who disturb assemblies, and obstruct public affairs, by gratifying their pride, their malice, their ambition, or their avarice.

Those who in a late reign began the distinction between the *personal* and *politic* capacity, seem to have had reason, if they judged of princes by themselves; for, I think there is hardly to be found through all nature a greater difference between two things, than there is between a representing commoner in the function of his public calling, and the same person when he acts in the common offices of life. Here he allows himself to be upon a level with the rest of mortals: here he follows his own reason, and his own way; and rather affects a singularity in his actions and thoughts, than servilely to copy either from the wisest of his neighbours. In short, here his folly, and his wisdom, his reason and his passions are all of his own growth, not the eccho or infusion of other men. But when he is got near the walls of his assembly, he assumes and affects an entire sett of very different airs; he conceives himself a being of a superior nature to those *without*, and acting in a sphere, where the vulgar methods for the conduct of human life can be of no use. He is listed in a party, where he neither knows the

temper, nor designs, nor perhaps the person of his leader; but whose opinions he follows and maintains with a zeal and faith as violent, as a young scholar does those of a philosopher, whose sect he is taught to profess. He hath neither opinions nor thoughts, nor actions, nor talk, that he can call his own, but all conveyed to him by his leader, as wind is through an organ. The nourishment he receives, hath been not only *chewed*, but *digested*, before it comes into his mouth. Thus instructed, he follows the *party* right or wrong through all its sentiments, and acquires a courage and stiffness of opinion not at all congenial with him.

This encourages me to hope, that during the present lucid interval, the members retired to their homes may suspend a while their *acquired* complexions, and taught by the calmness of the scene and the season, reassume the *native* sedateness of their temper. If this should be so, it would be wise in them, as individual and private mortals, to look back a little upon the storms they have *raised*, as well as those they had *escaped*. To reflect, that they have been authors of a new and wonderful thing in England, which is, for a house of Commons to loose the universal favour of the numbers they represent: to observe, how those, whom they thought fit to persecute for

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righteousness sake, have been openly carassed by the people; and to remember how themselves sate in fear of their persons from popular rage. Now, if they would know the secret of all this unprecedented proceeding in their *masters*, they must not impute it to their freedom in debate, or declaring their opinions, but to that unparliamentary abuse of *setting individuals upon their shoulders*, who were hated by God and man. For, it seems the mass of the people, in such conjunctures as this, have opened their eyes, and will not endure to be governed by Clodius and Curio, at the head of their Myrmidons, though these be ever so numerous, and composed of their own representatives.

This aversion of the people against the late proceedings of the Commons is an accident, that, if it last a while, might be improved to good uses for setting the balance of power a little more upon an equality, than their late measures seem to promise or admit. This accident may be imputed to two causes: the first is an universal fear and apprehension of the greatness and power of France, whereof the people in general seem to be very much and justly possessed, and therefore cannot but resent to see it, in so critical a juncture, wholly laid aside by their ministers, the Commons. The other cause is a great love and

sense of gratitude in the people towards their present King, grounded upon a long opinion and experience of his merit, as well as concessions to all their reasonable desires; so that it is for some time they have begun to say, and to fetch instances, where he hath in many things been hardly used. How long these humours may last, (for passions are momentary, and especially those of a multitude) or what consequences they may produce, a little time will discover. But whenever it comes to pass, that a popular assembly, free from such obstructions, and already possessed of more power, than an equal balance will allow, shall continue to think they have not enough, but by cramping the hand that holds the balance, and by *impeachments* or *diffensions* with the nobles, endeavour still for more; I cannot possibly see in the common course of things, how the same causes can produce different effects and consequences among us, from what they did in Greece and Rome.



MISCELLANY II.

A

P R O P O S A L

For correcting, improving, and ascertaining the

ENGLISH TONGUE.

In a LETTER to the most honourable
ROBERT Earl of Oxford and Mortimer,
Lord high Treasurer of Great-Britain.



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P R O P O S A L

For correcting, improving, and ascertaining the

ENGLISH TONGUE*.

To the Most Honourable

ROBERT Earl of OXFORD, *etc.*

MY LORD,

WHAT I had the honour of mentioning to your Lordship some time ago in conversation, was not a new thought, just then started by accident or occasion, but the result of long

* It is well known, that if the Queen had lived a year or two longer, this proposal would, in all probability, have taken effect. For the Lord Treasurer had already nominated several persons without distinction of quality or party, who were to compose a society for the purposes mentioned by the author; and resolved to use his credit with her Majesty, that a fund should be applied to support the expence of a large room, where the society should meet, and for other incidents. But this scheme fell to the ground, partly

reflection, and I have been confirmed in my sentiments by the opinion of some very judicious persons, with whom I consulted. They all a-

by the dissensions among the great men at court; but chiefly by the lamented death of that glorious prince.

This piece might have been a very useful performance, if it had been longer, and less eclipsed by compliments to the Noble person to whom it is addressed. It seems to have been intended as a preface to some more enlarged design: at the head of which such an introduction must have appeared with great propriety. A work of this kind is much wanted, as our language instead of being improved, is every day growing worse, and more debased. We bewilder ourselves in various orthography; we speak and we write at random; and if a man's common conversation were to be committed to paper, he would be startled *for to* find himself guilty in a few sentences, of so many solecisms and such false English. I believe we are the only people in the Christian world, who repeat the Lord's prayer in an ungrammatical manner: and I remember to have heard, that when a motion was made in the convocation to alter the word *which* for the word *who*, the proposition was rejected by the majority. This instance may shew you of what sort of men, the most learned, and even the most reverend assemblies are sometimes composed. But let us consider the conduct of a neighbouring nation. How industrious have the French been to improve their language? and to what a state of perfection have they brought it? Rome, by her conquests, made her dialect universal: France, by her policy, has done the same. By policy, I mean the encouragement of arts and sciences; which will often render a nation more powerful than arms. Nothing has contributed so much to the purity and excellence of the French tongue, as the noble academies established for that purpose: and, until some public work of the same kind is undertaken in England, we cannot flatter ourselves with any hopes of amending the errors, or ascertaining the limits of our style. I shall not presume even to whisper to you, that I think a design of

greed, that nothing would be of greater use towards the improvement of knowlege and politeness, than some effectual method for *correcting*,

this sort is sufficiently momentous to attract the consideration of our legislative powers. Their thoughts are otherwise employed, and their faculties otherwise applied. But I will venture to say, that if to our hospitals for lunatics, an hospital was added for the reception and support of men of sense and learning, it would be of the highest honour to the present age, and of no less advantage to posterity. I call it an hospital, because I suppose it to be erected for the benefit of such persons, whose infirm fortunes, or diseased revenues, may have rendered the strength and abilities of their minds weak and useless to the public: for I entirely agree with Aristotle, where he says, in the words of his scholiast, *Eam præclara et magna vix posse exequi et præstare, cui facultates defunt: quoniam per amicos et civilem potentiam, veluti per instrumenta, necesse est pleraque effici.* The reflections that arise from this theme, I find, are driving me beyond due bounds: therefore I shall only add, that I heartily wish you may think an attention to your native language as useful and improving a study as can be pursued, in whatever station of life Providence may allot you. *Orrery.*

In this epistle Dr Swift complains to the Earl of Oxford as first minister, in the name of all the learned and polite persons of the nation, that our language is extremely imperfect, that its daily improvements are by no means equal to its daily corruptions, that the pretenders to refine it have chiefly multiplied abuses and absurdities, and that in many instances it offends against every part of grammar. He proves with irresistible force of reason, that our language ought to be refined to a certain standard, and then fixed for ever: he remarks the several inconveniencies which arise perpetually from our stupid inattention to these matters. He doth not however prescribe any methods for ascertaining the language, but throws out some general observations, leaving the rest to the inspection of that society, which he hoped would have been speedily instituted by the Lord

enlarging and ascertaining our language; and they think it a work very possible to be compassed under the protection of a prince, the countenance and encouragement of a ministry, and the care of proper persons chosen for such an undertaking. I was glad to find your Lordship's answer in so different a style, from what hath been commonly made use of on the like occasions for some years past, *That all such thoughts must be deferred to a time of peace*: a topic which some have carried so far, that they would not have us by any means think of preserving our civil or religious constitution, because we are engaged in a war abroad. It will be among the distinguishing marks of your ministry, my Lord, that you have a genius above all such regards, and that no reasonable proposal for the honour, the advantage, or the ornament of your country, however foreign to your more immediate office, was ever neglected by you. I confess the merit of this candour and condescension is very much lessened, because your Lordship hardly leaves us room to offer our good wishes; removing all our difficulties, and supplying our wants, faster

Treasurer. But this scheme fell to the ground, partly by the dissensions among the great men at court, and chiefly by the lamented death of Q. Anne, that ever glorious princess. *Swift.*

than the most visionary projector can adjust his schemes. And therefore, my Lord, the design of this paper is not so much to offer you *ways* and *means*, as to complain of a *grievance*, the redressing of which is to be your own work as much as that of paying the *nation's debts*, or opening a trade into the South-sea; and though not of such immediate benefit, as either of these, or any other of your glorious actions, yet perhaps in further ages not less to your honour.

My Lord, I do here in the name of all the learned and polite persons of the nation complain to your Lordship as *first minister*, that our language is extremely imperfect; that its daily improvements are by no means in proportion to its daily corruptions; that the pretenders to polish and refine it have chiefly multiplied abuses and absurdities; and, that in many instances it offends against every part of grammar. But lest your Lordship should think my censure too severe, I shall take leave to be more particular.

I believe your Lordship will agree with me in the reason, why our language is less refined than those of Italy, Spain, or France. It is plain, that the Latin tongue in its purity was never in this island, towards the conquest of which few or no attempts were made till the time of Claudius; neither was that language ever so vulgar

in Britain, as it is known to have been in Gaul and Spain. Further, we find that the Roman legions here, were at length all recalled to help their country against the Goths, and other barbarous invaders. Mean time the Britains, left to shift for themselves, and daily harrassed by cruel inroads from the Picts, were forced to call in the Saxons for their defence; who consequently reduced the greatest part of the island to their own power, drove the Britains into the most remote and mountainous parts, and the rest of the country in customs, religion, and language, became wholly Saxon. This I take to be the reason, why there are more Latin words remaining in the British tongue than in the old Saxon, which, excepting some few variations in the orthography, is the same in most original words with our present English, as well as with the German and other Northern dialects.

Edward the *confessor*, having lived long in France, appears to be the first who introduced any mixture of the French tongue with the Saxon; the court affecting what the prince was fond of, and others taking it up for a fashion, as it is now with us. William the *conqueror* proceeded much further; bringing over with him vast numbers of that nation, scattering them in every monastery, giving them great quantities of land,

directing all pleadings to be in that language, and endeavouring to make it universal in the kingdom. This at least is the opinion generally received: but your lordship hath fully convinced me, that the French tongue made yet a greater progress here under Harry *the second*, who had large territories on that continent both from his father and his wife, made frequent journeys and expeditions thither, and was always attended with a number of his countrymen, retainers at his court. For some centuries after was a constant intercourse between France and England, by the dominions we possessed there, and the conquests we made; so that our language between two and three hundred years seems to have had a greater mixture with French than at present; many words having been afterwards rejected, and some since the time of Spenser; although we have still retained not a few, which have been long antiquated in France. I could produce several instances of both kinds, if it were of any use or entertainment.

To examine into the several circumstances by which the language of a country may be altered, would force me to enter into a wide field. I shall only observe, that the Latin, the French, and the English, seem to have undergone the same fortune. The first, from the days of Ro-

mulus to those of Julius Caesar, suffered perpetual changes : and by what we meet in those authors who occasionally speak on that subject, as well as from certain fragments of old laws, it is manifest that the Latin, three hundred years before Tully, was as unintelligible in his time, as the English and French of the same period are now ; and these two have changed as much since William *the conqueror* (which is but little less than seven hundred years) as the Latin appears to have done in the like term. Whether our language or the French will decline as fast as the Roman did, is a question, that would perhaps admit more debate than it is worth. There were many reasons for the corruptions of the last : as, the change of their government to a tyranny, which ruined the study of eloquence, there being no further use or encouragement for popular orators : their giving not only the freedom of the city, but capacity for employments, to several towns in Gaul, Spain, and Germany, and other distant parts, as far as Asia ; which brought a great number of foreign pretenders into Rome : the slavish disposition of the senate and people, by which the wit and eloquence of the age were wholly turned into panegyric, the most barren of all subjects : the great corruptions of manners, and introduction of foreign luxury, with foreign terms to

express it, with several others, that might be assigned; not to mention those invasions from the Goths and Vandals, which are too obvious to insist on.

The Roman language arrived at great perfection, before it began to decay: and the French for these last fifty years hath been polishing as much as it will bear, and appears to be declining by the natural inconstancy of that people, and the affectation of some late authors to introduce and multiply cant words, which is the most ruinous corruption in any language. La Bruyere, a late celebrated writer among them, makes use of many new terms, which are not to be found in any of the common dictionaries before his time. But the English tongue is not arrived to such a degree of perfection, as to make us apprehend any thoughts of its decay; and if it were once refined to a certain standard, perhaps there might be ways found out to fix it for ever, or at least till we are invaded and made a conquest by some other state; and even then our best writings might probably be preserved with care, and grow into esteem, and the authors have a chance for immortality.

But without such great revolutions as these (to which we are, I think, less subject than kingdoms upon the continent) I see no absolute necessity

why any language should be perpetually changing; for we find many examples to the contrary. From Homer to Plutarch are above a thousand years; so long at least the purity of the Greek tongue may be allowed to last, and we know not how far before. The Grecians spread their colonies round all the coasts of Asia Minor, even to the Northern parts lying towards the Euxine, in every island of the Ægean sea, and several others in the Mediterranean; where the language was preserved entire for many ages, after they themselves became colonies to Rome, and till they were over-run by the barbarous nations upon the fall of that Empire. The Chinese have books in their language above two thousand years old, neither have the frequent conquests of the Tartars been able to alter it. The German, Spanish, and Italian, have admitted few or no changes for some ages past. The other languages of Europe I know nothing of; neither is there any occasion to consider them.

Having taken this compass, I return to those considerations upon our own language, which I would humbly offer your lordship. The period, wherein the English tongue received most improvement, I take to commence with the beginning of queen Elizabeth's reign, and to conclude with the great rebellion in forty-two. 'Tis true,

there was a very ill taste both of style and wit, which prevailed under king James the first; but that seems to have been corrected in the first years of his successor, who among many other qualifications of an excellent prince, was a great patron of learning. From the civil war to this present time, I am apt to doubt whether the corruptions in our language have not at least equalled the refinements of it; and these corruptions very few of the best authors in our age have wholly escaped. During the usurpation, such an infusion of enthusiastic jargon prevailed in every writing, as was not shaken off in many years after. To this succeeded that licentiousness which entered with the restoration, and from infecting our religion and morals fell to corrupt our language; which last was not like to be much improved by those, who at that time made up the court of King Charles the second: either such, who had followed him in his banishment, or who had been altogether conversant in the dialect of those fanatic times; or young men, who had been educated in the same country; so that the court, which used to be the standard of propriety and correctness of speech, was then, and, I think, hath ever since continued the worst school in England for that accomplishment; and so will remain, till better care be taken in the education

of our young nobility, that they may set out into the world with some foundation of literature, in order to qualify them for patterns of politeness. The consequence of this defect upon our language may appear from the plays, and other compositions written for entertainment within fifty years past; filled with a succession of affected phrases, and new conceited words, either borrowed from the current style of the court, or from those, who under the character of men of wit and pleasure pretended to give the law. Many of these refinements have already been long antiquated, and are now hardly intelligible; which is no wonder, when they were the product only of ignorance and caprice.

I have never known this great town without one or more *dunces* of figure, who had credit enough to give rise to some new word, and propagate it in most conversations, though it had neither humour nor significancy. If it struck the present taste, it was soon transferred into the plays and current scribbles of the week, and became an addition to our language; while the men of wit and learning, instead of early obviating such corruptions, were too often seduced to imitate and comply with them.

There is another set of men, who have contributed very much to the spoiling of the English

tongue; I mean, the poets from the time of the restoration. These gentlemen, although they could not be insensible how much our language was already overstocked with monosyllables, yet to save time and pains introduced that barbarous custom of abbreviating words, to fit them to the measure of their verses; and this they have frequently done so very injudiciously, as to form such harsh and unharmonious sounds, that none but a northern ear could endure; they have joined the most obdurate consonants without one intervening vowel, only to shorten a syllable: and their taste in time became so depraved, that what was at first a poetical licence not to be justified, they made their choice, alledging, that the words pronounced at length sounded faint and languid. This was a pretence to take up the same custom in prose: so that most of the books we see now a days, are full of those manglings and abbreviations. Instances of this abuse are innumerable: what does your lordship think of the words, *drudg'd*, *disturb'd*, *rebuk'd*, *fledg'd*, and a thousand others every where to be met with in prose as well as verse? Where by leaving out a vowel, to save a syllable, we form so jarring a sound, and so difficult to utter, that I have often wondered how it could ever obtain.

Another cause (and perhaps borrowed from the

former) which hath contributed not a little to the maiming of our language, is a foolish opinion, advanced of late years, that we ought to spell exactly as we speak; which, beside the obvious inconvenience of utterly destroying our etymology, would be a thing we should never see an end of. Not only the several towns and counties of England have a different way of pronouncing, but even here in London they clip their words after one manner about the court, another in the city, and a third in the suburbs: and in a few years, it is probable, will all differ from themselves, as fancy or fashion shall direct: all which reduced to writing would entirely confound orthography. Yet many people are so fond of this conceit, that it is sometimes a difficult matter to read modern books and pamphlets; where the words are so curtailed, and varied from their original spelling, that whoever hath been used to plain English, will hardly know them by sight.

Several young men at the universities, terribly possessed with the fear of pedantry, run into a worse extreme, and think all politeness to consist in reading the trash sent down to them from hence: this they call *knowing the world, and reading men and manners*. Thus furnished they come up to town, reckon all their errors

for accomplishments, borrow the newest sett of phrases; and if they take a pen into their hands, all the odd words they have picked up in a coffee house, or a gaming ordinary, are produced as flowers of style; and the orthography refined to the utmost. To this we owe those monstrous productions, which under the name of *trips*, *spies*, *amusements*, and other conceited appellations, have over-run us for some years past. To this we owe that strange race of wits, who tell us, they write to the *humour of the age*. And I wish I could say, these quaint fopperies were wholly absent from graver subjects. In short, I would undertake to shew your lordship several pieces, where the beauties of this kind are so predominant, that with all your skill in languages you could never be able to read or understand them.

But I am very much mistaken, if many of these false refinements among us do not arise from a principle, which would quite destroy their credit, if it were well understood and considered. For I am afraid, my lord, that with all the real good qualities of our country we are naturally not very polite. This perpetual disposition to shorten our words, by retrenching the vowels, is nothing else but a tendency to lapse into the barbarity of those Northern nations, from whom we

are descended, and whose languages labour all under the same defect. For it is worthy our observation, that the Spaniards, the French, and the Italians, although derived from the same Northern ancestors with ourselves, are with the utmost difficulty taught to pronounce our words, which Swedes and Danes, as well as the Germans and the Dutch, attain to with ease, because our syllables resemble theirs in the roughness and frequency of consonants. Now, as we struggle with an ill climate, to improve the nobler kinds of fruits, are at the expence of walls to receive and reverberate the faint rays of the sun, and fence against the Northern blasts, we sometimes by the help of a good soil equal the production of warmer countries who have no need to be at so much cost and care. It is the same thing with respect to the polite arts among us; and the same defect of heat which gives a fierceness to our natures, may contribute to that roughness of our language, which bears some analogy to the harsh fruit of colder countries. For I do not reckon that we want a *genius* more than the rest of our neighbours: but your lordship will be of my opinion, that we ought to struggle with these natural disadvantages as much as we can, and be careful whom we employ, whenever we design to correct them, which is a work that has hitherto

been assumed by the least qualified hands. So that if the choice had been left to me, I would rather have trusted the refinement of our language, as far as it relates to sound, to the judgment of the women, than of illiterate court-fops, half-witted poets, and university-boys. For it is plain, that women in their manner of corrupting words do naturally discard the consonants, as we do the vowels. What I am going to tell your lordship appears very trifling; that more than once, where some of both sexes were in company, I have persuaded two or three of each to take a pen, and write down a number of letters joined together, just as it came into their heads; and upon reading this gibberish, we have found that which the men had wrote, by the frequent encountring of rough consonants, to sound like High Dutch; and the other by the women like Italian, abounding in vowels and liquids. Now, though I would by no means give ladies the trouble of advising us in the reformation of our language, yet I cannot help thinking, that since they have been left out of all meetings, except parties at play, or where worse designs are carried on, our conversation hath very much degenerated.

In order to reform our language, I conceive, my lord that a free judicious choice should be

made of such persons, as are generally allowed to be best qualified for such a work, without any regard to quality, party, or profession. These, to a certain number at least, should assemble at some appointed time and place, and fix on rules, by which they design to proceed. What methods they will take, is not for me to prescribe. Your lordship, and other persons in great employment, might please to be of the number: and I am afraid such a society would want your instruction and example as much as your protection; for I have, not without a little envy, observed of late the style of some great ministers very much to exceed that of any other productions.

The persons who are to undertake this work will have the example of the French before them to imitate, where these have proceeded right, and to avoid their mistakes. Besides the grammar-part, wherein we are allowed to be very defective, they will observe many gross improprieties, which however authorised by practice, and grown familiar, ought to be discarded. They will find many words that deserve to be utterly thrown out of our language, many more to be corrected, and perhaps not a few long since antiquated, which ought to be restored on account of their energy and sound.

But what I have most at heart, is, that some

method should be thought on for *ascertaining* and *fixing* our language for ever, after such alterations are made in it as shall be thought requisite. For I am of opinion, that it is better a language should not be wholly perfect, than that it should be perpetually changing: and we must give over at one time, or at length infallibly change for the worse, as the Romans did, when they began to quit their *simplicity* of style for affected refinements, such as we meet in Tacitus and other authors; which ended by degrees in many barbarities, even before the Goths had invaded Italy.

The fame of our writers is usually confined to these two islands, and it is hard it should be limited in *time* as much as *place* by the perpetual variations of our speech. It is your lordship's observation, that if it were not for the Bible and Common Prayer Book in the vulgar tongue, we should hardly be able to understand any thing, that was written among us an hundred years ago; which is certainly true: for those books being perpetually read in churches, have proved a kind of standard for language, especially to the common people. And I doubt, whether the alterations since introduced, have added much to the beauty or strength of the English tongue, though they have taken off a great deal from that

simplicity, which is one of the greatest perfections in any language. You, my lord, who are so conversant in the sacred writings, and so great a judge of them in their originals, will agree, that no translation our country ever yet produced, hath come up to that of the Old and New Testament: and by the many beautiful passages, which I have often had the honour to hear your lordship cite from thence, I am persuaded, that the translators of the bible were masters of an English style much fitter for that work, than any we see in our present writings; which I take to be owing to the *simplicity* that runs through the whole. Then, as to the greatest part of our *liturgy*, compiled long before the translation of the Bible now in use, and little altered since; there seem to be in it as great strains of true sublime eloquence, as are any where to be found in our language; which every man of good taste will observe in the *communion service*, that of *burial*, and other parts.

But when I say, that I would have our language, after it is duly correct, always to last, I do not mean that it should never be enlarged. Provided that no word, which a society shall give a sanction to, be afterwards antiquated and exploded, they may have liberty to receive whatever new ones they shall find occasion for; be-

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cause then the old books will yet be always valuable according to their intrinsic worth, and not thrown aside on account of unintelligible words and phrases, which appear harsh and uncouth, only because they are out of fashion. Had the Roman tongue continued vulgar in that city till this time, it would have been absolutely necessary, from the mighty changes that have been made in law and religion, from the many terms of art required in trade and in war, from the new inventions that have happened in the world, from the vast spreading of navigation and commerce, with many other obvious circumstances, to have made great additions to that language; yet the ancients would still have been read and understood with pleasure and ease. The Greek tongue received many enlargements between the time of Homer and that of Plutarch, yet the former author was probably as well understood in Trajan's time as the latter. What Horace says of *words going off and perishing like leaves, and new ones coming in their place*, is a misfortune he laments, rather than a thing he approves; but I cannot see why this should be absolutely necessary, or if it were, what would have become of his *monumentum aere perennius*.

Writing by memory only, as I do at present, I would gladly keep within my depth; and

therefore shall not enter into further particulars. Neither do I pretend more than to shew the usefulness of this design, and to make some general observations, leaving the rest to that society, which I hope will owe its institution and patronage to your Lordship. Besides, I would willingly avoid repetition, having about a year ago communicated to the public much of what I had to offer upon this subject, by the hands of an ingenious gentleman, who for a long time did thrice a week divert or instruct the kingdom by his papers; and is supposed to pursue the same design at present under the title of Spectator. This author, who hath tried the force and compass of our language with so much success, agrees entirely with me in most of my sentiments relating to it; so do the greatest part of the men of wit and learning, whom I have had the happiness to converse with; and therefore I imagine that such a society would be pretty unanimous in the main points.

Your Lordship must allow, that such a work as this, brought to perfection, would very much contribute to the glory of her Majesty's reign; which ought to be recorded in words more durable than brass, and such as our posterity may read a thousand years hence with pleasure as well as admiration. I always disapproved that false

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compliment to princes, that the most lasting monument they can have, is the hearts of their subjects. It is indeed their greatest present felicity to reign in their subjects hearts; but these are too perishable to preserve their memories, which can only be done by the pens of able and faithful historians. And I take it to be your Lordship's duty, as *prime minister*, to give order for inspecting our language, and rendering it fit to record the history of so great and good a prince. Besides, my Lord, as disinterested as you appear to the world, I am convinced, that no man is more in the power of a prevailing favourite passion than yourself; I mean that desire of true and lasting honour, which you have borne along with you through every stage of your life. To this you have often sacrificed your interest, your ease, and your health: for preserving and increasing this you have exposed your person to secret treachery and open violence. There is not perhaps an example in history of any minister, who in so short a time hath performed so many great things, and overcome so many difficulties. Now, though I am fully convinced, that you fear God, honour your Queen, and love your country, as much as any of your fellow subjects, yet I must believe, that the desire of fame hath been no inconsiderable motive to quicken you in the pursuit of those actions, which will best de-

serve it. But at the same time I must be so plain as to tell your Lordship, that if you will not take some care to settle our language, and put it into a state of continuance, I cannot promise that your memory shall be preserved above an hundred years, farther than by imperfect tradition.

As barbarous and ignorant as we were in former centuries, there was more effectual care taken by our ancestors to preserve the memory of times and persons, than we find in this age of learning and politeness, as we are pleased to call it. The rude Latin of the monks is still very intelligible; whereas, had their records been delivered down only in the vulgar tongue, so barren and so barbarous, so subject to continual succeeding changes, they could not now be understood, unless by antiquaries, who make it their study to expound them. And we must at this day have been content with such poor abstracts of our English story, as laborious men of low genius would think fit to give us: and even these in the next age would be likewise swallowed up in succeeding collections. If things go on at this rate, all I can promise your Lordship, is, that about two hundred years hence some painful compiler, who will be at the trouble of studying old language, may inform the world,

that in the reign of Queen Anne, Robert Earl of Oxford, a very wise and excellent man, was made *high treasurer*, and saved his country, which in those days was almost ruined by a *foreign war*, and a *domestic faction*. Thus much he may be able to pick out, and willing to transfer into his new history: but the rest of your character which I or any other writer may now value ourselves by drawing, and the particular account of the great things done under your ministry, for which you are already so celebrated in most parts of Europe, will probably be dropped on account of the antiquated style and manner they are delivered in. How then shall any man, who hath a genius for history equal to the best of the ancients, be able to undertake such a work with spirit and chearfulness, when he considers that he will be read with pleasure but a very few years, and in an age or two shall hardly be understood without an interpreter? This is like employing an excellent statuary to work upon mouldering stone. Those, who apply their studies to preserve the memory of others, will always have some concern for their own. And I believe it is for this reason, that so few writers among us of any distinction have turned their thoughts to such a discouraging employment: for the best English historian

must lie under this mortification, that when his style grows antiquated, he will be only considered as a tedious relator of facts; and perhaps consulted in his turn among other neglected authors to furnish materials for some future collector.

I doubt your Lordship is but ill entertained with a few scattered thoughts upon a subject, that deserves to be treated with ability and care: however, I must beg leave to add a few words more, perhaps not altogether foreign to the same matter. I know not whether that which I am going to say may pass for caution, advice, or reproach, any of which will be justly thought very improper from one in my station to one in yours. However, I must venture to affirm, that if genius and learning be not encouraged under your Lordship's administration, you are the most inexcusable person alive. All your other virtues, my Lord, will be defective without this; your affability, candor, and good nature; that perpetual agreeableness of conversation, so disengaged in the midst of such a weight of business and opposition; even your justice, prudence, and magnanimity, will shine less bright without it. Your Lordship is universally allowed to possess a very large portion in most parts of literature; and to this you owe the cultivating those many virtues which otherwise would have been less a-

dorned, or in lower perfection. Neither can you acquit yourself of these obligations, without letting the arts in their turn share your influence and protection: besides, who knows but some *true genius* may happen to arise under your ministry, *exortus ut ætherius sol*. Every age might perhaps produce one or two of these to adorn it, if they were not sunk under the censure and obloquy of plodding, servile, imitating pedants: I do not mean by a true genius any bold writer, who breaks through the rules of decency to distinguish himself by the singularity of his opinions: but one, who upon a deserving subject is able to open new scenes, and discover a vein of true and noble thinking, which never entered into any imagination before; every stroke of whose pen is worth all the paper blotted by hundreds of others in the compass of their lives. I know, my Lord, your friends will offer in your defence, that in your private capacity you never refused your purse and credit to the service and support of learned or ingenious men: and that ever since you have been in public employment, you have constantly bestowed your favours to the most deserving persons. But I desire your Lordship not to be deceived: we never will admit of these excuses, nor will allow your private liberality, as great as it is, to

atone for your excessive public thrift. But here again I am afraid most good subjects will interpose in your defence, by alledging the desperate condition you found the nation in, and the necessity there was for so able and faithful a steward to retrieve it, if possible, by the utmost frugality. We grant all this, my Lord; but then it ought likewise to be considered, that you have already saved several millions to the public, and that what we ask is too inconsiderable to break into any rules of the strictest good husbandry. The French King bestows about half a dozen pensions to learned men in several parts of Europe, and perhaps a dozen in his own kingdom; which in the whole do probably not amount to half the income of many a private commoner in England, yet have more contributed to the glory of that prince, than any million he hath otherwise employed. For learning, like all true merit, is easily satisfied; whilst the false and counterfeit is perpetually craving, and never thinks it hath enough. The smallest favour given by a great prince, as a mark of esteem, to reward the endowments of the mind, never fails to be returned with praise and gratitude, and loudly celebrated to the world. I have known some years ago several pensions given to particular persons, (how deservedly I shall not inquire) any one of which, if divided

into smaller parcels, and distributed by the crown to those, who might upon occasion distinguish themselves by some extraordinary production of wit or learning, would be amply sufficient to answer the end. Or if any such persons were above money, (as every great *genius* certainly is with very moderate conveniencies of life) a medal, or some mark of distinction, would do full as well.

But I forgot my province, and find myself turning projector before I am aware: although it be one of the last characters under which I should desire to appear before your Lordship, especially when I have the ambition of aspiring to that of being with the greatest respect and truth,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's

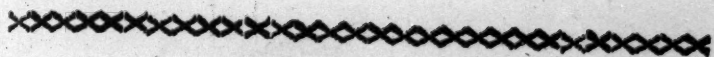
most obedient, most obliged,

and most humble servant,

LONDON, Feb. 22,

1711-12.





MISCELLANY III.

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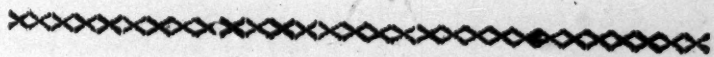
LETTER

TO A

YOUNG CLERGYMAN

Lately entered into

HOLY ORDERS.





A
 L E T T E R
 T O A
 Y O U N G C L E R G Y M A N
 Lately entered into
 H O L Y O R D E R S*.

S I R,

DUBLIN, *Jan.* 9. 1719-20.

ALTHOUGH it was against my knowledge or advice, that you entered into holy orders, under the present dispositions of mankind towards the *church*; yet since it is now supposed too late to recede, (at least according to the general practice and opinion), I cannot forbear offering my thoughts to you upon this new condition of life you are engaged in.

* This ought to be read by all the young clergymen in the three Kingdoms. Though it be addressed only to a young clergyman, yet it is adopted to every age and understanding. It contain observations that delight and improve every mind; and may be read with pleasure and advantage by the oldest and most exemplary divines. *Orrery.*

K

I could heartily wish, that the circumstances of your fortune had enabled you to have continued some years longer in the university, at least till you were ten years standing; to have laid in a competent stock of human learning, and some knowlege in divinity, before you attempted to appear in the world: for I cannot but lament the common course, which at least nine in ten of those who enter into the ministry are obliged to run. When they have taken a degree, and are consequently grown a burden to their freinds, who now think themselves fully discharged, they get into orders as soon as they can, (upon which I shall make no remarks); first solicit a readership, and, if they be fortunate, arrive in time to a curacy here in town, or else are sent to be assistants in the country, where they probably continue several years, (many of them their whole lives), with thirty or forty pounds a-year for their support; till some bishop, who happens to be not over-stocked with relations, or attached to favourites, or is content to supply his diocese without colonies from England, bestows upon them some inconsiderable benefice, when it is odds they are already incumbered with a numerous family. I would be glad to know, what intervals of life such persons can possibly set apart for the improvement of their minds; or

which way they could be furnished with books, the library they brought with them from their college, being usually not the most numerous, or judiciously chosen. If such gentlemen arrive to be great scholars, it must, I think, be either by means supernatural, or by a method altogether out of any road yet known to the learned. But I conceive the fact directly otherwise, and that many of them lose the greatest part of the small pittance they received at the university.

I take it for granted, that you intend to pursue the beaten track, and are already desirous to be seen in a pulpit; only I hope you will think it proper to pass your quarantine among some of the desolate churches five miles round this town, where you may at least learn to *read* and to *speak*, before you venture to expose your parts in a city congregation; not that these are better judges, but because if a man must needs expose his folly, it is more safe and discreet to do so before few witnesses, and in a scattered neighbourhood. And you will do well, if you can prevail upon some intimate and judicious friend to be your constant hearer, and allow with the utmost freedom to give you notice of whatever he shall find amiss either in your voice or gesture; for want of which early warning many clergymen continue defective, and sometimes ridiculous, to

the end of their lives. Neither is it rare to observe, among excellent and learned divines, a certain ungracious manner, or an unhappy tone of voice, which they have never been able to shake off.

I could likewise have been glad, if you had applied yourself a little more to the study of the English language, than I fear you have done; the neglect whereof is one of the most general defects among the scholars of this kingdom, who seem not to have the least conception of a style, but run on in a flat kind of phraseology, often mingled with barbarous terms and expressions peculiar to the nation: neither do I perceive, that any person either finds or acknowledges his wants upon this head, or in the least desires to have them supplied. Proper words in proper places make the true definition of a style. But this would require too ample a disquisition to be now dwelt on. However, I shall venture to name one or two faults, which are easy to be remedied with a very small portion of abilities.

The first is, the frequent use of obscure terms, which by the women are called *hard words*, and by the better sort of vulgar *fine language*; than which I do not know a more universal, inexcusable, and unnecessary mistake, among the clergy of all distinctions, but especially the younger

practitioners. I have been curious enough to take a list of several hundred words in a sermon of a new beginner, which not one of his hearers among a hundred could possibly understand: neither can I easily call to mind, any clergyman of my own acquaintance, who is wholly exempt from this error, although many of them agree with me in the dislike of the thing. But I am apt to put myself in the place of the vulgar, and think many words difficult or obscure, which the preacher will not allow to be so, because those words are obvious to scholars. I believe the method observed by the famous Lord Falkland, in some of his writings, would not be an ill one for young divines. I was assured by an old person of quality who knew him well, that when he doubted whether a word were perfectly intelligible or no, he used to consult one of his lady's chambermaids, (not the waiting-woman, because it was possible she might be conversant in romances), and by her judgment was guided whether to receive or reject it. And if that great person thought such a caution necessary, in treatises offered to the learned world, it will be sure at least as proper in sermons, where the meanest hearer is supposed to be concerned, and where very often a lady's chambermaid may be allowed to equal half the congregation, both as to quality and under-

standing. But I know not how it comes to pass, that professors in most arts and sciences are generally the worst qualified to explain their meanings to those who are not of their tribe. A common farmer shall make you understand, in three words, *that his foot is out of joint, or his collar-bone broken*; wherein a *surgeon*, after a hundred terms of art, if you are not a scholar, shall leave you to seek. It is frequently the same case in law, physic, and even many of the meaner arts.

And upon this account it is, that, among *hard words*, I number likewise those which are peculiar to divinity, as it is a science, because I have observed several clergymen, otherwise little fond of obscure terms, yet in their sermons very liberal of those which they find in ecclesiastical writers, as if it were our duty to understand them; which I am sure it is not. And I defy the greatest divine to produce any law, either of God or man, which obliges me to comprehend the meaning of *omniscience, omnipresence, ubiquity, attribute, beatific vision*, with a thousand others so frequent in pulpits, any more than that of *eccentric, idiosyncrasy, entity*, and the like. I believe I may venture, to insist further, that many terms used in holy writ, particularly by St. Paul, might, with more discretion, be changed into plainer speech, except

when they are introduced as part of a quotation.

I am the more earnest in this matter, because it is a general complaint, and the justest in the world. For a divine hath nothing to say to the wisest congregation or any parish in this kingdom, which he may not express in a manner to be understood by the meanest among them. And this assertion must be true, or else God requires from us more than we are able to perform. However, not to contend whether a logician might possibly put a case that would serve for an exception, I will appeal to any man of letters, whether at least nineteen in twenty of those perplexing words might not be changed into easy ones, such as naturally first occur to ordinary men, and probably did so at first to those very gentlemen who are so fond of the former.

We are often reproved by divines from the pulpits on account of our ignorance in things sacred, and perhaps with justice enough: however, it is not very reasonable for them to expect, that *common men* should understand expressions which are never made use of in *common life*. No gentleman thinks it safe or prudent to send a servant with a message, without repeating it more than once, and endeavouring to put it into terms brought down to the capacity of the bearer: yet,

after all this care, it is frequent for servants to mistake, and some times occasion misunderstandings among friends; although the common domestics in some gentlemens families have more opportunities of improving their minds than the ordinary sort of tradesmen.

It is usual for clergymen who are taxed with this learned defect, to quote Dr. Tillotson, and other famous divines, in their defence; without considering the difference between elaborate discourses upon important occasions, delivered to princes or parliaments, written with a view of being made public, and a plain sermon, intended for the middle or lower size of people. Neither do they seem to remember the many alterations, additions, and expungings, made by great authors, in those treatises which they prepare for the public. Besides, that excellent prelate above mentioned was known to preach after a much more popular manner in the city congregations: and if in those parts of his works he be any where too obscure for the understandings of many who maybe supposed to have been his hearers, it ought to be numbered among his omissions.

The fear of being thought pedants, hath been of pernicious consequence to young divines. This hath wholly taken many of them off from their severer studies in the university; which they have exchanged for plays, poems, and pamphlets,

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in order to qualify them for tea-tables and coffee-houses. This they usually call *polite conversation*, *knowing the world*, and *reading men instead of books*. These accomplishments, when applied in the pulpit, appear by a quaint, terse, florid style, rounded into periods and cadences, commonly without either propriety or meaning. I have listened with my utmost attention for half an hour to an orator of this species, without being able to understand, much less to carry away one single sentence out of a whole sermon. Others, to shew that their studies have not been confined to sciences, or ancient authors, will talk in the style of a gaming ordinary, and White Friars*, when, I suppose, the hearers can be little edified by the terms *palming*, *shuffling*, *biting*, *hamboozling*, and the like, if they have not been sometimes conversant among pick-pockets and sharpers. And truly, as they say a man is known by his company, so it should seem, that a

* The style of White Friars was that of sharpers, bullies, and other fugitives from the law. This precinct, in 1609, obtained from King James a charter of exemption from parish ward, and city offices, except in the militia. Being possessed thereof, the inhabitants claimed afterwards a power and right to protect the persons of debtors; whereby the place became filled with lawless refugees of all sorts, who grew to such a height of wickedness and impudence, that it was found necessary in King William's time, by act of parliament, to suppress and bring them to justice. *Hawk.*

man's company may be known by his manner of expressing himself, either in public assemblies, or private conversation.

It would be endless to run over the several defects of style among us. I shall therefore say nothing of the *mean* and the *paltry*, (which are usually attended by the *fustian*), much less of the *slovenly* or *indecent*. The first is, the frequency of flat unnecessary epithets; and the other is, the folly of using old threadbare phrases, which will often make you go out of your way to find and apply them, are nauseous to rational hearers, and will seldom express your meaning as well as your own natural words.

Although, as I have already observed, our English tongue is too little cultivated in this kingdom, yet the faults are nine in ten owing to affectation, and not to the want of understanding. When a man's thoughts are clear, the properest words will generally offer themselves first; and his own judgment will direct him in what order to place them, so as they may be best understood. Where men err against this method, it is usually on purpose, and to shew their learning, their oratory, their politeness, or their knowledge of the world. In short, that simpli-city, without which no human performance can

arrive to any great perfection, is no where more eminently useful than in this.

I have been considering that part of oratory which relates to the moving of the passions. This, I observe, is in esteem and practice among some church-divines, as well as among all the preachers and hearers of the fanatic or enthusiastic strain. I will here deliver to you (perhaps with more freedom than prudence) my opinion upon the point.

The two great orators of Greece and Rome, Demosthenes and Cicero, though each of them a leader (or, as the Greeks call it, a *demagogue*) in a popular state, yet seem to differ in their practice upon this branch of their art. The former, who had to deal with a people of much more politeness, learning, and wit, laid the greatest weight of his oratory upon the strength of his arguments offered to their understanding and reason; whereas Tully considered the dispositions of a sincere, more ignorant, and less mercurial nation, by dwelling almost entirely on the pathetic part.

But the principal thing to be remembered, is, that the constant design of both these orators in all their speeches was to drive some particular point, either the condemnation or acquittal of an accused person, a persuasive to war, the inforc-

ing of a law, and the like : which was determined upon the spot, according as the orators on either side prevailed. And here it was often found of absolute necessity, to inflame or cool the passions of the audience; especially at Rome, where Tully spoke, and with whose writings young divines (I mean those among them who read old authors) are more conversant than with those of Demosthenes, who by many degrees excelled the other, at least as an orator. But I do not see how this talent of moving the passions can be of any great use, towards directing christian men in the conduct of their lives, at least in these *northern* climates *, where I am confident the strongest eloquence of that kind will leave few impressions upon any of our spirits, deep enough to last till the next morning, or rather to the next meal.

But what hath chiefly put me out of conceit with this moving manner of preaching, is the frequent disappointment it meets with. I know a gentleman who made it a rule in reading, to skip over all sentences where he spied a note of ad-

* This dissuasive against an attempt to move the passions, is not intended to censure those discourses, by which *hope* and *fear* are excited, by an exhibition of their proper objects in proper language; but that cant only, by which hypocrites affect to be melted into tears. *Hawkes*.

miration at the end. I believe those preachers who abound in *epiphonemas* *, if they look about them, would find one part of their congregation out of countenance, and the other asleep, except perhaps an old female beggar or two in the isles, who, (if they be sincere) may probably groan at the sound.

Nor is it a wonder that this expedient should so often miscarry, which requires so much art and genius to arrive at any perfection in it; as every man will find, much sooner than learn, by consulting Cicero himself.

I therefore intreat you to make use of this faculty (if you be ever so unfortunate as to think you have it) as seldom, and with as much caution as you can; else I may probably have occasion to say of you, as a great person said of another upon this very subject. A lady asked him, coming out of church, whether it were not a very moving discourse? *Yes*, said he, *I was extremely sorry, for the man is my friend.*

If in company, you offer something for a jest, and no body seconds you in your laughter, or seems to relish what you said, you may condemn their taste, if you please, and appeal to better judgments: but in the mean time, it must be

* *Epiphonema* is a figure in *rhetoric*, signifying a sententious kind of exclamation. *Hawkes.*

agreed, you make a very indifferent figure: and it is at least equally ridiculous, to be disappointed in endeavouring to make other folks grieve, as to make them laugh.

A plain convincing reason may possibly operate upon the mind, both of a learned and ignorant hearer, as long as they live, and will edify a thousand times more than the art of wetting the handkerchiefs of a whole congregation, if you were sure to attain it.

If your arguments be strong, in God's name offer them in as moving a manner as the nature of the subject will properly admit, wherein reason and good advice will be your safest guides: but beware of letting the pathetic part swallow up the rational; for I suppose *philosophers* have long agreed, that passion should never prevail over reason.

As I take it, the two principal branches of preaching are, first, to tell the people what is their duty, and then to convince them that it is so. The topics for both these, we know, are brought from *scripture* and *reason*. Upon the former, I wish it were often practised, to instruct the hearers in the limits, extent and compass of every duty, which requires a good deal of skill and judgment: the other branch is, I think, not so difficult. But what I would offer upon

both, is this, that it seems to be in the power of a reasonable clergymen, if he will be at the pains, to make the most ignorant man comprehend what is his duty, and to convince him by arguments drawn to the level of his understanding, that he ought to perform it.

But I must remember, that my design in this *paper* was not so much to instruct you in your business, either as a clergyman or a preacher, as to warn you against some mistakes, which are obvious to the generality of mankind, as well as to me; and we who are hearers, may be allowed to have some opportunities in the quality of being standers by. Only, perhaps, I may now again transgress, by desiring you to express the heads of your divisions in as few and clear words as your possibly can; otherwise I, and many thousand others, will never be able to retain them, nor consequently to carry away a syllable of the sermon.

I shall now mention a particular, wherein your whole body will be certainly against me, and the laity, almost to a man, on my side. However it came about, I cannot get over the prejudice of taking some little offence at the clergy, for perpetually reading their sermons; perhaps my frequent hearing of foreigners, who never makes use of notes, may have added to

my disgust. And I cannot but think, that whatever is read, differs as much from what is repeated without book, as a copy does from an original. At the same time, I am highly sensible, what an extreme difficulty it would be upon you to alter this method; and that, in such a case, your sermons would be much less valuable than they are, for want of time to improve and correct them. I would therefore gladly come to a compromise with you in this matter. I knew a clergyman of some distinction, who appeared to deliver his sermon without looking into his notes; which when I complimented him upon, he assured me, he could not repeat six lines; his method was, to write the whole sermon in a large plain hand, with all the forms of margin, paragraph, marked page, and the like; then on Sunday morning he took care to run it over five or six times, which he could do in an hour; and when he delivered it, by pretending to turn his face from one side to the other, he would (in his own expression) pick up the lines, and cheat his people by making them believe he had it all by heart. He farther added, that whenever he happened by neglect to omit any of these circumstances, the vogue of the *parish* was, *Our Doctor gave us but an indifferent sermon to-day*. Now, among us, many clergymen act so directly con-

trary to this method, that, from a habit of saving *time* and *paper*, which they acquired at the university, they write in so diminutive a manner, with frequent blots and interlineations, that they are hardly able to go on without perpetual hesitations, or extemporary expletives: and I desire to know, what can be more inexcusable, than to see a divine and a scholar at a loss in reading his own compositions, which it is supposed he has been preparing with much *pain* and *thought*, for the instruction of the people? The want of a little more care in this article, is the cause of much ungraceful behaviour. You will observe some clergymen, with their heads held down from the beginning to the end, within an inch of the cushion, to read what is hardly legible; which, besides the untoward manner, hinders them from making the best advantage of their voice: others again have a trick of popping up and down every moment from their *paper* to the audience, like an idle schoolboy on a repetition-day.

Let me intreat you therefore, to add one half-crown a-year to the article of *paper*; to transcribe your sermons in as large and plain a manner as you can; and either make no interlineations, or change the whole leaf; for we, your hearers, would rather you should be less correct,

than perpetually flammering, which I take to be one of the worst *solecisms* in *rhetoric*. And, lastly, read your sermon once or twice a day for a few days before you preach it. To which you will probably answer some years hence, *that it was but just finished, when the last bell rang to church*; and I shall readily believe, but not excuse you.

I cannot forbear warning you, in the most earnest manner, against endeavouring at wit in your sermons; because, by the strictest computation, it is very near a million to one that you have none; and because too many of your calling have consequently made themselves everlastingly ridiculous by attempting it. I remember several young men in this town, who could never leave the *pulpit* under half a dozen *conceits*; and this faculty adhered to those gentlemen a longer or shorter time, exactly in proportion to their several degrees of dulness: accordingly, I am told that some of them retain it to this day. I heartily wish the brood were at an end.

Before you enter into the common unsufferable cant of taking all occasions to disparage the Heathen *philosophers*, I hope you will differ from some of your brethren, by first inquiring what those *philosophers* can say for themselves. The system of morality to be gathered out of the

writings or sayings of those ancient sages, falls undoubtedly very short of that delivered in the gospel; and wants, besides, the divine sanction which our Saviour gave to his. Whatever is further related by the evangelists, contains chiefly matters of fact, and consequently of faith; such as, the birth of Christ, his being the Messiah, his miracles, his death, resurrection, and ascension; none of which can properly come under the appellation of human wisdom, being intended only to make us wise unto salvation. And therefore, in this point, nothing can be justly laid to the charge of the *philosophers*, further than that they were ignorant of certain facts which happened long after their death. But I am deceived, if a better comment could be any where collected upon the moral part of the gospel, than from the writings of those excellent men; even that divine precept of loving our enemies, is at large insisted on by Plato, who puts it, as I remember, into the mouth of Socrates. And as to the reproach of Heathenism I doubt they had less of it than the corrupted Jews, in whose time they lived. For it is a gross piece of ignorance among us, to conceive, that, in those polite and learned ages, even persons of any tolerable education, much less the wisest philosophers, did acknowledge or worship any more than one almighty

power, under several denominations, to whom they allowed all those attributes we ascribe to the Divinity: and, as I take it, human comprehension reacheth no further. Neither did our Saviour think it necessary to explain to us the nature of God; because, as I suppose, it would be impossible, without bestowing on us other faculties than we possess at present. But the true misery of the heathen world appears to be, what I before mentioned, the want of a divine sanction, without which the dictates of the philosophers failed in the point of authority; and consequently the bulk of mankind lay indeed under a great load of ignorance, even in the article of morality; but the philosophers themselves did not. Take the matter in this light, and it will afford field enough for a divine to enlarge on, by shewing the advantages which the Christian world hath over the Heathen, and the absolute necessity of divine revelation, to make the knowledge of the true God, and the practice of virtue, more universal in the world.

I am not ignorant how much I differ in this opinion from some ancient fathers in the church, who arguing against the Heathens, made it a principal topic to decry their philosophy as much as they could; which I hope is not altogether our present case. Besides, it is to be considered, that

those fathers lived in the decline of *literature*; and in my judgment (who should be unwilling to give the least offence) appear to be rather most excellent holy persons, than of transcendent genius and learning. Their genuine writings (for many of them have extremely suffered by spurious additions) are of admirable use for confirming the truth of ancient doctrines and discipline, by shewing the state and practice of the primitive church. But among such of them as have fallen in my way, I do not remember any whose manner of arguing or exhorting I could heartily recommend to the imitation of a young divine, when he is to speak from the pulpit. Perhaps I judge too hastily; there being several of them in whose writings I have made very little progress, and in others none at all. For I perused only such as were recommended to me, at a time when I had more leisure, and a better disposition to read, than have since fallen to my share.

To return then to the Heathen philosophers: I hope you will not only give them quarter, but make their works a considerable part of your study. To these I will venture to add the principal orators and historians, and perhaps a few of the poets: by the reading of which, you will soon discover your mind and thoughts to be enlarged, your imagination extended and refined,

your judgment directed, your admiration lessened, and your fortitude increased; all which advantages must needs be of excellent use to a divine, whose duty it is to preach and practise the contempt of human things.

I would say something concerning quotations; wherein I think you cannot be too sparing, except from scripture, and the primitive writers of the church. As to the former, when you offer a text as a proof or an illustration, we your hearers expect to be fairly used, and sometimes think we have reason to complain, especially of you younger divines; which makes us fear, that some of you conceive you have no more to do than to turn over a concordance, and there having found the principal word, introduce as much of the verse as will serve your turn, though in reality it makes nothing for you. I do not altogether disapprove the manner of interweaving texts of scripture into the style of your sermon; wherein, however, I have sometimes observed great instances of indiscretion and impropriety; against which I therefore venture to give you a caution.

As to quotations from ancient fathers. I think they are best brought in to confirm some opinion, controverted by those who differ from us. In other cases, we give you full power to adopt the sentence for your own, rather than tell us

as *St. Austin* excellently observes. But to mention modern writers by name, or use the phrase of a late excellent prelate of our church, and the like, is altogether intolerable, and, for what reason I know not, makes every rational hearer ashamed. Of no better a stamp is your *Heathen philosopher*, and famous poet, and *Roman historian*, at least in common congregations; who will rather believe you on your own word, than on that of Plato and Homer.

I have lived to see Greek and Latin almost entirely driven out of the pulpit; for which I am heartily glad. The frequent use of the latter was certainly a remnant of Popery, which never admitted Scripture in the vulgar language; and I wonder that practice was never accordingly objected to us by the Fanatics.

The mention of quotations puts me in mind of common-place books, which have been long in use by industrious young divines; and, I hear, do still continue so. I know they are very beneficial to lawyers and physicians, because they are collections of facts or cases, whereupon a great part of their several faculties depend: of these I have seen several, but never yet any written by a clergyman. Only, from what I am informed, they generally are extracts of theological and moral sentences, drawn from ecclesiastical and other

authors, reduced under proper heads, usually begun, and perhaps finished, while the collectors were young in the church, as being intended for materials, or nurseries to stock future sermons. You will observe the wise editors of ancient authors when they meet a sentence worthy of being distinguished, take special care to have the first word printed in capital letters, that you may not overlook it: such, for example, as *the inconstancy of fortune, the goodness of peace, the excellency of wisdom, the certainty of death; that prosperity makes men insolent, and adversity humble;* and the like eternal truths, which every ploughman knows well enough, though he never heard of Aristotle or Plato. If theological commonplace books be no better filled, I think they had better be laid aside; and I could wish that men of tolerable intellectuals would rather trust their own natural reason, improved with a general conversation with books, to enlarge on a point which they are supposed already to understand. If a rational man reads an excellent author with just application, he shall find himself extremely improved, and perhaps insensibly led to imitate that author's perfections, although in a little time he should not remember one word in the book, nor even the subject it handled: for books give the same turn to our thoughts and way of reason-

ing, that good and ill company does to our behaviour and conversation; without either loading our memories, or making us even sensible of the charge. And particularly I have observed in preaching, that no men succeed better than those who trust entirely to the stock or fund of their own reason, advanced indeed, but not overlaid by commerce with books. Whoever only reads in order to transcribe wise and shining remarks, without entering into the genius and spirit of the author, as it is probable he will make no very judicious extract, so he will be apt to trust to that collection in all his compositions, and be misled out of the regular way of thinking, in order to introduce those materials which he has been at the pains to gather: and the product of all this will be found a manifest incoherent piece of patch-work.

Some gentlemen, abounding in their university erudition, are apt to fill their sermons with philosophical terms and notions of the metaphysical or abstracted kind; which generally have one advantage, to be equally understood by the wise, the vulgar, and the preacher himself. I have been better entertained, and more informed, by a few pages in the *Pilgrim's progress*, than by a long discourse upon the *will* and the *intellect*, and *simple* or *complex ideas*. Others again

are fond of dilating on *matter* and *motion*, talk of the *fortuitous concourse of atoms*, of *theories*, and *phenomena*; directly against the advice of St. Paul, who yet appears to have been conversant enough in those kind of studies.

I do not find that you are any where directed in the canons or articles, to attempt explaining the mysteries of the Christian religion. And indeed, since Providence intended there should be mysteries, I do not see how it can be agreeable to *piety*, *orthodoxy*, or *good sense*, to go about such a work. For, to me, there seems to be a manifest dilemma in them: If you explain them, they are mysteries no longer; if you fail, you have laboured to no purpose. What I should think most reasonable and safe for you to do upon this occasion, is, upon solemn days to deliver the doctrine, as the church holds it, and confirm it by scripture. For my part, having considered the matter impartially, I can see no reason which those gentlemen you call the *Freethinkers*, can have for their clamour against religious mysteries; since it is plain they were not invented by the clergy, to whom they bring no profit, nor acquire any honour; for every clergyman is ready, either to tell us the utmost he knows, or to confess that he does not understand them: neither is it strange,

there should be mysteries in divinity, as well as in the commonest operations of nature.

And here I am at a loss what to say upon the frequent custom of preaching against *Atheism*, *Deism*, *Freethinking*, and the like, as young divines are particularly fond of doing, especially when they exercise their talent in churches frequented by persons of quality; which as it is but an ill compliment to the audience, so I am under some doubt whether it answers the end.

Because persons under those imputations are generally no great frequenters of churches, and so the congregation is but little edified for the sake of three or four fools, who are past grace: neither do I think it any part of *prudence*, to perplex the minds of well disposed people with doubts, which probably would never have otherwise come into their heads. But I am of opinion, and dare be positive in it, that not one in a hundred of those who pretend to be *Freethinkers*, are really so in their hearts. For there is one observation, which I never knew to fail, and I desire you will examine it in the course of your life, that no gentleman of a liberal education, and regular in his morals, did ever profess himself a *Freethinker*. Where then are these kind of people to be found? Among the worst part of the soldiery, made up of pages, younger bro-

thers of obscure families, and others of desperate fortunes; or else among idle town-fops, and now and then a drunken 'squire of the country. Therefore nothing can be plainer, than that ignorance and vice are two ingredients absolutely necessary in the composition of those you generally call *Freethinkers*, who, in propriety of speech, are *no thinkers at all*. And since I am in the way of it, pray consider one thing farther. As young as you are, you cannot but have already observed, what a violent run there is among too many weak people against university-education: be firmly assured, that the whole cry is made up by those who were either never sent to a college, or, through their irregularities and stupidity, never made the least improvement while they were there. I have above forty of the latter sort now in my eye; several of them in this town, whose *learning, manners, temperance, probity, good nature, and politics*, are all of a piece: others of them in the country, oppressing their tenants, tyrannising over the neighbourhood, cheating the vicar, talking nonsense, and getting drunk at the sessions. It is from such seminaries as these, that the world is provided with the several tribes and denominations of *Freethinkers*; who, in my judgment, are not to be reformed by arguments offered to prove the truth of the *Christian*

religion, because reasoning will never make a man correct an ill opinion, which by reasoning he never acquired: for, in the course of things, men always grow vicious, before they become unbelievers. But if you could once convince the town or country profligate, by topics drawn from the view of their own *quiet, reputation, health, and advantage*, their *infidelity* would soon drop off. This, I confess, is no easy task; because it is, almost in a literal sense, to fight with beasts. Now, to make it clear, that we are to look for no other original of this *infidelity*, whereof divines so much complain, it is allowed on all hands, that the people of England are more corrupt in their *morals*, than any other nation at this day under the *sun*: and this corruption is manifestly owing to other causes, both *numerous* and *obvious*, much more than to the publication of irreligious books, which indeed are but the consequence of the former; for all the writers against Christianity, since the revolution, have been of the lowest rank among men in regard to *literature, wit, and good sense*, and upon that account wholly unqualified to propagate *heresies*, unless among a people already abandoned.

In an age, where every thing disliked by those who think with the majority, is called *disaffection*, it may perhaps be ill interpreted, when I

venture to tell you, that this universal depravation of *manners* is owing to the perpetual bandying of *factions* among us for thirty years past; when, without weighing the *motives* of *justice*, *law*, *conscience*, or *honour*, every man adjusts his *principles* to those of the *party* he hath chosen, and among whom he may best find his own account: but, by reason of our frequent vicissitudes, men who were impatient of being out of play, have been forced to recant, or at least to reconcile their former tenets with every new system of administration. Add to this, that the old fundamental custom of annual parliaments being wholly laid aside, and elections growing chargeable, since gentlemen found that their country seats brought them in less than a seat in the house, the voters, *that is to say*, the bulk of the common people, have been universally seduced into *bribery*, *perjury*, *drunkenness*, *malice*, and *slander*.

Not to be farther tedious, or rather invidious, these are a few, among other causes, which have contributed to the ruin of our *morals*, and consequently to the contempt of *religion*: for imagine to yourself, if you please, a landed youth, whom his mother would never suffer to look into a book for fear of spoiling his eyes, got into parliament, and observing all enemies to the cler-

gy heard with the utmost applause, what notions he must imbibe, how readily he will join in the cry, what an esteem he will conceive of himself, and what a contempt he must entertain, not only for his vicar at home, but for the whole order.

I therefore again conclude, that the trade of *infidelity* hath been taken up only for an expedient to keep in countenance that universal corruption of *morals*, which many other causes first contributed to introduce and to cultivate. And thus Mr. Hobbes's saying upon reason may be much more probably applied to religion, That *if religion will be against a man, a man will be against religion*. Though, after all, I have heard a profligate offer much stronger arguments against paying his debts, than ever he was known to do against *Christianity*. Indeed, the reason was, because in that juncture he happened to be closer pressed by the *bailiff* than the *parson*.

Ignorance may perhaps be the *mother* of *superstition*; but *experience* hath not proved it to be so of *devotion*; for *Christianity* always made the most easy and quickest progress in civilized countries. I mention this, because it is affirmed, that the clergy are in most credit where ignorance prevails, (and surely this kingdom would be called the *paradise* of clergymen, if that opinion

were true); for which they instance England in the times of *Popery*. But whoever knoweth any thing of three or four centuries before the reformation, will find the little learning then stirring was more equally divided between the English clergy and laity, than it is at present. There were several famous lawyers in that *period*, whose writings are still in the highest repute; and some *historians* and *poets*, who were not of the *church*. Whereas now-a-days our education is so corrupted, that you will hardly find a young person of quality with the least tincture of knowlege, at the same time that many of the clergy were never more learned or so scurvily treated. Here among us, at least, a man of letters, out of the three professions, is almost a prodigy. And those few who have preserved any rudiments of learning, are (except perhaps one or two smatterers) the clergy's friends to a man: and I dare appeal to any clergyman in this kingdom, whether the greatest dunce in this parish be not always the most proud, wicked, fraudulent, and intractable of his flock.

I think the clergy have almost given over perplexing themselves and their hearers with abstruse points of predestination, election, and the like; at least, it is time they should; and therefore I shall not trouble you further upon this head.

M I S C E L L A N I E S. 143

I have now said all I could think convenient with relation to your conduct in the pulpit. Your behaviour in the world is another scene, upon which I shall readily offer you my thoughts, if you appear to desire them from me by your approbation of what I have here written; if not, I have already troubled you too much.

I am, S. J. R.,

Your affectionate

friend and servant.

MISCELLANEOUS

I have not yet received your letter of the 10th inst. and am sorry to hear that you are not well. I hope you will soon be able to write to me again. I am very anxious to hear from you and to hear how you are getting on. I am well at present and hope to hear from you soon.

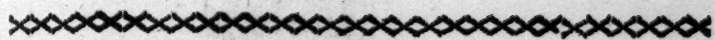


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MISCELLANY IV.

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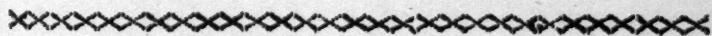
LETTER

TO A VERY

Y O U N G L A D Y

ON HER

M A R R I A G E.





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M A D A M,

THE hurry and impertinence of receiving and paying visits on account of your marriage being now over, you are beginning to enter into a course of life, where you will want much advice to divert you from falling into many errors, fopperies, and follies, to which your sex is subject. I have always borne an entire friendship to your father and mother; and the person they have chosen for your husband, hath been

* This letter ought to be read by all new-married women; and will be read with pleasure and advantage by the most distinguished and most accomplished ladies. *Orrery.*

for some years past my particular favourite; I have long wished you might come together, because I hoped, that, from the goodness of your disposition, and by following the counsel of wise friends, you might in time make yourself worthy of him. Your parents were so far in the right, that they did not produce you much into the world; whereby you avoided many wrong steps, which others have taken, and have fewer ill impressions to be removed; but they failed, as it is generally the case, in too much neglecting to cultivate your mind; without which it is impossible to acquire or preserve the friendship and esteem of a man, who soon grows weary of acting the lover, and treating his wife like a mistress, but wants a reasonable companion, and a true friend, through every stage of his life. It may be therefore your business to qualify yourself for those offices; wherein I will not fail to be your director, as long as I shall think you deserve it, by letting you know how you are to act, and what you ought to avoid.

And beware of despising or neglecting my instructions; whereon will depend not only your making a good figure in the world, but your own real happiness, as well as that of the person who ought to be dearest to you.

I must therefore desire you, in the first place,

to be very slow in changing the *modest behaviour* of a *virgin*. It is usual in young wives, before they have been many weeks married, to assume a bold forward look, and manner of talking: as if they intended to signify in all companies, that they were no longer girls, and consequently that their whole demeanor, before they got a husband, was all but a countenance and constraint upon their nature: whereas, I suppose, if the votes of wise men were gathered, a very great majority would be in favour of those ladies, who, after they were entered into that state, rather chuse to double their portion of modesty and reservedness.

I must likewise warn you strictly against the least degree of *fondness* to your husband before any witness whatsoever, even before your nearest relations, or the very maids of your chamber. This proceeding is so exceeding odious and disgusting to all who have either good breeding or good sense, that they assign two very unamiable reasons for it. The one is gross hypocrisy, and the other has too bad a name to mention. If there is any difference to be made, your husband is the lowest person in company, either at home or abroad; and every gentleman present has a better claim to all marks of civility and distinction from you. Conceal your esteem and love

in your breast, and reserve your kind looks and language for private hours; which are so many in the four and twenty, that they will afford to employ a passion as exalted as any that was ever described in a French romance.

Upon this head I shall likewise advise you to differ in practice from those ladies who affect abundance of *uneasiness* while their husbands are abroad: start with every knock at the door, and ring the bell incessantly for the servants to let in their master; will not eat a bit at dinner or supper, if the husband happens to stay out; and receive him at his return with such a medley of chiding and kindness, and catechising him where he has been, that a shrew from Billingsgate would be a more easy and eligible companion.

Of the same leaven are those wives, who, when their husbands are gone a journey, must have a letter every post upon pain of fits and hysterics; and a day must be fixed for their return home, without the least allowance for business, or sickness, or accidents, or weather. Upon which I can only say, that, in my observation, those ladies who are apt to make the greatest clutter on such occasions, would liberally have paid a messenger for bringing them news, that their husbands had broke their necks on the road.

You will perhaps be offended, when I advise

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you to abate a little of that violent passion for *fine cloaths* so predominant in your sex. It is a little hard, that ours, for whose sake you wear them, are not admitted to be of your council. I may venture to assure you, that we will make an abatement at any time of four pounds a-yard in a brocade, if the ladies will but allow a suitable addition of care in the *cleanliness* * and sweetness of their persons. For the satirical part of mankind will needs believe, that it is not impossible to be very fine and very filthy; and that the capacities of a lady are sometimes apt to fall short in cultivating cleanliness and finery together. I shall only add, upon so tender a subject, what a pleasant gentleman said concerning a silly woman of quality, That nothing could make her supportable but cutting off her head; for his ears were offended by her tongue, and his nose by her hair and teeth.

I am wholly at a loss how to advise you in the choice of *company*; which, however, is a point of as great importance as any in your life. If your general acquaintance be among the ladies, who are your equals or superiors, provided they have nothing of what is commonly called an ill reputation, you think you are safe; and this, in

* The reader will easily perceive, that *this letter*, and the description of a *Lady's dressing-room*, in vol. 6. were not written in England. *Hawkes.*

the style of the world, will pass for good company: whereas I am afraid, it will be hard for you to pick out one female acquaintance in this town, from whom you will not be in manifest danger of contracting some foppery, affectation, vanity, folly, or vice. Your only safe way of conversing with them, is, by a firm resolution to proceed in your practice and directly contrary to whatever they shall say or do. And this I take to be a good general rule, with very few exceptions. For instance: In the doctrines they usually deliver to young married women for managing their husbands; their several accounts of their own conduct in that particular, to recommend it to your imitation; the reflections they make upon others of their sex for acting differently; their directions, how to come off with victory upon any dispute or quarrel you may have with your husband; the arts, by which you may discover and practise upon his weak side; when to work by flattery and insinuation, when to melt him with tears, and when to engage with a high hand: in these, and a thousand other cases, it will be prudent to retain as many of their lectures in your memory as you can, and then determine to act in full opposition to them all.

I hope your husband will interpose his authority to limit you in the trade of *visiting*. Half a

dozen fools are, in all conscience, as many as you should require: and it will be sufficient for you to see them twice a year; for I think the fashion does not exact, that visits should be paid to friends.

I advise, that your company at home should consist of men, rather than women. To say the truth, I never yet knew a tolerable woman to be fond of her own sex. I confess, when both are mixed and well chosen, and put their best qualities forward, there may be an intercourse of civility and good will; which, with the addition of some degree of sense, can make conversation or any amusement agreeable. But a knot of ladies got together by themselves, is a very school of impertinence and detraction, and it is well if those be the worst.

Let your men-acquaintance be of your husband's choice, and not recommended to you by any she-companions; because they will certainly fix a coxcomb upon you, and it will cost you some time and pains before you can arrive at the knowledge of distinguishing such a one from a man of sense.

Never take a *favourite waiting-maid* into your cabinet-council, to entertain you with histories of those ladies whom she hath formerly served, of their diversions and their dresses; to insinuate

how great a fortune you brought, and how little you are allowed to squander; to appeal to her from your husband, and to be determined by her judgment, because you are sure it will be always for you; to receive and discard servants by her approbation or dislike; to engage you, by her insinuations, in misunderstandings with your best friends; to represent all things in false colours, and to be the common emissary of scandal.

But the grand affair of your life will be, to gain and preserve the friendship and esteem of your *husband*. You are married to a man of good education and learning, of an excellent understanding, and an exact taste. It is true, and it is happy for you, that these qualities in him are adorned with great modesty, a most amiable sweetness of temper, and an unusual disposition to sobriety and virtue. But neither good nature nor virtue will suffer him to *esteem* you against his judgment; and although he is not capable of using you ill, yet you will in time grow a thing indifferent and perhaps contemptible; unless you can supply the loss of youth and beauty with more durable qualities. You have but a very few years to be young and handsome in the eyes of the world; and as few months to be so in the eyes of a husband who is not a fool; for I hope you do not still dream of charms and raptures,

which marriage ever did, and ever will put a sudden end to. Besides, yours was a match of prudence and common good-liking, without any mixture of that ridiculous passion, which hath no being but in play books and romances.

You must therefore use all endeavours to attain to some degree of those accomplishments, which your husband most values in other people, and for which he is most valued himself. You must improve your mind by closely pursuing such a method of study as I shall direct or approve of. You must get a collection of history and travels, which I will recommend to you, and spend some hours every day in reading them, and making extracts from them, if your memory be weak. You must invite persons of knowledge and understanding to an acquaintance with you, by whose conversation you may learn to correct your taste and judgment; and when you can bring yourself to comprehend and relish the good sense of others, you will arrive in time to think rightly yourself, and to become a reasonable and agreeable companion. This must produce in your husband a true rational love and esteem for you, which old age will not diminish. He will have a regard for your judgment and opinion in matters of the greatest weight; you will be able to entertain each other without a

third person to relieve you by finding discourse. The endowments of your mind will even make your person more agreeable to him; and when you are alone, your time will not lie heavy upon your hands for want of some trifling amusement.

As little respect as I have for the generality of your sex, it hath sometimes moved me with pity, to see the lady of the house forced to withdraw immediately after dinner; and this in families where there is not much drinking; as if it were an established maxim, That women are incapable of all conversation. In a room where both sexes meet, if the men are discoursing upon any general subject, the ladies never think it their business to partake in what passeth; but, in a separate club, entertain each other with the price and choice of lace, and silk, and what dresses they liked or disapproved at the church or the play-house. And when you are among yourselves, how naturally, after the first compliments, do you apply your hands to each others lappets, and ruffles, and mantuas: as if the whole business of your lives, and the public concern of the world depended upon the cut or colour of your dresses? As divines say, that some people take more pains to be damned, than it would cost them to be saved; so your sex employs more thought, me-

mory, and application, to be fools, than would serve to make them wise and useful. When I reflect on this, I cannot conceive you to be human creatures, but a certain species hardly a degree above a monkey; who have more diverting tricks than any of you, is an animal less mischievous and expensive, might in time be a tolerable critic in velvet and brocade, and, for ought I know, would equally become them.

I would have you look upon finery as a necessary folly; which all great ladies did, whom I have ever known. I do not desire you to be out of the fashion, but to be the last and least in it. I expect, that your dress shall be one degree lower than your fortune can afford; and, in your own heart, I would wish you to be an utter contemner of all distinctions which a finer petticoat can give you; because it will neither make you richer, handsomer, younger, better natured, more virtuous or wise, than if it hung upon a peg.

If you are in company with men of learning, though they happen to discourse of arts and sciences out of your compass, yet you will gather more advantage by listening to them, than from all the nonsense and frippery of your own sex; but if they be men of breeding as well as learning, they will seldom engage in any conversation

where you ought not to be a hearer, and in time have your part. If they talk of the manners and customs of the several kingdoms of Europe, of travels into remoter nations, of the state of their own country, or of the great men and actions of Greece and Rome; if they give their judgment upon English and French writers, either in verse or prose, or of the nature and limits of virtue and vice; it is a shame for an English lady not to relish such discourses, not to improve by them, and endeavour, by reading and information, to have her share in those entertainments, rather than turn aside, as it is the usual custom, and consult with the woman who sits next her about a new cargo of fans.

It is a little hard, that not one gentleman's daughter in a thousand should be brought to read or understand her own natural tongue, or to be judge of the easiest books that are written in it; as any one may find, who can have the patience to hear them, when they are disposed to mangle a play or a novel; where the least word out of the common road, is sure to disconcert them; and it is no wonder, when they are not so much as taught to spell in their childhood, nor can ever attain to it in their whole lives. I advise you therefore to read aloud, more or less, every day to your husband, if he will permit you, or to

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any other friend (but not a female one) who is able to set you right. And as for spelling, you may compass it in time, by making collections from the books you read.

I know very well, that those who are commonly called learned women, have lost all manner of credit, by their impertinent talkativeness, and conceit of themselves. But there is an easy remedy for this; if you once consider, that, after all the pains you may be at, you never can arrive in point of learning, to the perfection of a school-boy. The reading I would advise you to, is only for improvement of your own good sense, which will never fail of being mended by discretion. It is a wrong method, and ill choice of books, that makes those learned ladies just so much the worse for what they have read. And therefore it shall be my care to direct you better; a task for which I take myself to be not ill qualified; because I have spent more time, and have had more opportunities than many others, to observe and discover, from what sources the various follies of women are derived.

Pray observe, how insignificant things are the common race of ladies, when they have passed their youth and beauty; how contemptible they appear to the men, and yet more contemptible to the younger part of their own sex; and have

no relief, but in passing their afternoons in visits, where they are never acceptable; and their evenings at cards among each other; while the former part of the day is spent in spleen and envy, or in vain endeavours to repair, by art and dress, the ruins of time. Whereas I have known ladies at sixty, to whom all the polite part of the court and town paid their addresses, without any farther view, than that of enjoying the pleasure of their conversation.

I am ignorant of any one quality that is amiable in a man, which is not equally so in a woman. I do not except even modesty and gentleness of nature. Nor do I know one vice or folly, which is not equally detestable in both. There is indeed one infirmity, which is generally allowed you; I mean that of *cowardice*. Yet there should seem to be something very capricious, that when women profess their admiration for a colonel or a captain, on account of his valour, they should fancy it a very graceful becoming quality in themselves, to be afraid of their own shadows; to scream in a barge, when the weather is calmest, or in a coach at the ring; to run from a cow at a hundred yards distance; to fall into fits at the sight of a spider, an earwig, or a frog. At least, if cowardice be a sign of cruelty, (as it is generally granted), I can hardly

think it an accomplishment so desirable, as to be thought worth improving by affectation.

And as the same virtues equally become both sexes, so there is no quality whereby women endeavour to distinguish themselves from men, for which they are not just so much the worse, except that only of reservedness; which however, as you generally manage it, is nothing else but affectation or hypocrisy. For as you cannot too much discountenance those of our sex who presume to take unbecoming liberty before you, so you ought to be wholly unconstrained in the company of deserving men, when you have had sufficient experience of their discretion.

There is never wanting in this town, a tribe of bold, swaggering, rattling ladies, whose talents pass among coxcombs for wit and humour; their excellency lies in rude choking expressions, and what they call *running a man down*. If a gentleman in their company happens to have any blemish in his birth or person, if any misfortune hath befallen his family or himself, for which he is ashamed, they will be sure to give him broad hints of it without any provocation. I would recommend you to the acquaintance of a common prostitute, rather than to that of such termagants as these. I have often thought, that no man is obliged to suppose such creatures to be

women, but to treat them as insolent rascals disguised in female habits, who ought to be stripped, and kicked down stairs.

I will add one thing, although it be a little out of place; which is, to desire that you will learn to value and esteem your husband for those good qualities which he really possesseth, and not to fancy others in him which he certainly hath not. For although this latter is generally understood to be a mark of love, yet it is indeed nothing but affectation or ill judgment. It is true, he wants so very few accomplishments, that you are in no great danger of erring on this side; but my caution is occasioned by a lady of your acquaintance, married to a very valuable person, whom yet she is so unfortunate as to be always commending for those perfections to which he can least pretend.

I can give you no advice upon the article of *expence*: only I think you ought to be well informed, how much your husband's revenue amounts to; and be so good a computer, as to keep within it, in that part of the management which falls to your share; and not to put yourself in the number of those politic ladies, who think they gain a great point, when they have teased their husbands to buy them a new equipage, a laced head, or a fine petticoat, without once

MISCELLANIES. 163

considering what long scores remain unpaid to the butcher.

I desire you will keep this letter in your cabinet, often examine impartially your whole conduct by it. And so God bless you, and make you a fair example to your sex, and a perpetual comfort to your husband, and your parents. I am, with great truth and affection.

MADAM,

Your most faithful friend,

and humble servant.

MRS. C. E. L. A. N. I. S.

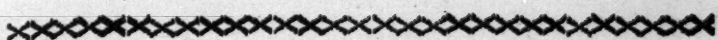
...which you will keep the same in your care.
...of this you have not made
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XX



MISCELLANY V.

A N

A R G U M E N T

T O P R O V E T H A T T H E

ABOLISHING of CHRISTIANITY

I N

E N G L A N D,

May, as Things now stand, be
attended with some Inconveni-
encies, and perhaps not pro-
duce those many good Effects
proposed thereby.

Written in the Year 1708.



THE

MISCELLANEOUS

ARGUMENT

TO PROVE THAT THE

ABOLISHING OF SLAVERY

IS

AS FOLLOWS:—
It is a well-known fact, that
the abolition of slavery is
a measure which has been
proposed in many countries,
and has been adopted in
some of them.

It is a measure which has been
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and has been adopted in
some of them.

It is a measure which has been
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RELATIVE TO
Abolishing Christianity*.

I AM very sensible, what a weakness and presumption it is, to reason against the general humour and disposition of the world. I remember it was with great justice, and a due regard to the freedom, both of the public and the press,

* *The argument against abolishing Christianity, is carried on with the highest wit and humour. Graver divines threaten their readers with future punishments: Swift artfully exhibits a picture of present shame. He judged rightly in imagining, that a small treatise written with a spirit of mirth and freedom, must be more efficacious, than long sermons, or laborious lessons of morality. He endeavours to laugh us into religion; well knowing, that we are often laughed out of it. Orrery.*

The argument, &c. is the most delicate, refined, complete, unvaried piece of irony, from the beginning to the end, that ever was written since the creation of the world. And without dispute, if in the works of man there can be sup-

forbidden, upon severe penalties, to write, or discourse, or lay wagers against the *union*, even before it was confirmed by parliament ; because that was looked upon as a design to oppose the current of the people ; which, besides the folly of it, is a manifest breach of the fundamental law, that makes this majority of opinion the voice of God. In like manner, and for the very same reasons, it may perhaps be neither safe nor prudent to argue against the abolishing of Christianity, at a juncture when all parties appear so unanimously determined upon the point ; as we cannot but allow from the affectation of singularity, or the perverseness of human nature ; but so it unhappily falls out, that I cannot be entirely of this opinion. Nay, though I were sure an order were issued for my immediate prosecution by the Attorney General, I should still confess, that, in the present posture of our affairs at home or abroad, I do not yet see the absolute necessity of extirpating the Christian religion from among us.

posed any such thing as real perfection, we must allow it to consist in those amazing productions of wit and humour, which in all probability can never be excelled by any effort of genius, and beyond which it is impossible to frame any critical or distinct idea of the human faculties.——With what egregious contempt and ridicule doth he, in this piece, expose the absurdity of those wretches, who are the patrons and abettors of vice and irreligion ? *Swift.*

This perhaps may appear too great a paradox, even for our wise and paradoxical age to endure: therefore I shall handle it with all tenderness, and with the utmost deference to the great and profound majority, which is of another sentiment.

And yet the curious may please to observe, how much the genius of a nation is liable to alter in half an age. I have heard it affirmed for certain, by some very old people, that the contrary opinion was, even in their memories, as much in vogue as the other is now; and that a project for the abolishing of Christianity would then have appeared as singular, and been thought as absurd, as it would be at this time to write or discourse in its defence.

Therefore I freely own, that all appearances are against me. The system of the gospel, after the fate of other systems, is generally antiquated and exploded; and the mass or body of the common people, among whom it seems to have had its latest credit, are now grown as much ashamed of it as their betters; opinions, like fashions, always descending from those of quality to the middle sort, and thence to the vulgar, where at length they are dropped, and vanish.

But here I would not be mistaken; and must therefore be so bold as to borrow a distinction

from the writers on the other side, when they make a difference between nominal and real *Trinitarians*. I hope no reader imagines me so weak to stand up in the defence of real Christianity, such as used in primitive times (if we may believe the authors of those ages) to have an influence upon mens belief and actions. To offer at the restoring of that, would indeed be a wild project: it would be to dig up foundations; to destroy at one blow all the wit, and half the learning of the kingdom; to break the entire frame and constitution of things; to ruin trade, extinguish arts and sciences, with the professors of them; in short, to turn our courts, exchanges, and shops into deserts: and would be full as absurd as the proposal of Horace, where he advises the Romans, all in a body, to leave their city, and to seek a new seat in some remote part of the world, by way of cure for the corruption of their manners.

Therefore I think this caution was in itself altogether unnecessary, (which I have inserted only to prevent all possibility of cavilling); since every candid reader will easily understand my discourse to be intended only in defence of nominal Christianity; the other having been for some time wholly laid aside by general consent,

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as utterly inconsistent with our present schemes of wealth and power.

But why we should therefore cast off the name and title of Christians, although the general opinion and resolution be so violent for it, I confess I cannot (with submission) apprehend, nor is the consequence necessary. However, since the undertakers propose such wonderful advantages to the nations by this project, and advance many plausible objections against the system of Christianity; I shall briefly consider the strength of both, fairly allow them their greatest weight, and offer such answers I think most reasonable. After which I will beg leave to shew, what inconveniencies may possibly happen by such an innovation, in the present posture of our affairs.

First, One great advantage proposed by the abolishing of Christianity is, That it would very much enlarge and establish liberty of conscience, that great bulwark of our nation, and of the Protestant religion; which is still too much limited by Priestcraft, notwithstanding all the good intentions of the legislature; as we have lately found by a severe instance. For it is confidently reported, that two young gentlemen, of real hopes, bright wit, and profound judgment, who upon a thorough examination of causes and effects, and by the mere force of natural abilities,

without the least tincture of learning, having made a discovery, that there was no God, and generously communicating their thoughts for the good of the public, were some time ago, by an unparalleled severity, and upon I know not what obsolete law, broke *only for blasphemy*. And, as it hath been wisely observed, if persecution once begins, no man alive knows how far it may reach, or where it will end.

In answer to all which, with deference to wiser judgments, I think this rather shews the necessity of a nominal religion among us. Great wits love to be free with the highest objects; and, if they cannot be allowed a God to revile or renounce, they will *speakevil of dignities*, abuse the government, and reflect upon the ministry: which, I am sure, few will deny to be of much more pernicious consequence; according to the saying of Tiberius, *Deorum offensa diis curæ*. As to the particular fact related, I think it not fair to argue from one instance; perhaps another cannot be produced: yet (to the comfort of all those who may be apprehensive of persecution) blasphemy, we know, is freely spoken a million of times in every coffeehouse and tavern, or where-ever else *good company* meet. It must be allowed indeed, that to break an English free-born officer only for blasphemy, was, to speak

the gentlest of such an action, a very high strain of absolute power. Little can be said in excuse for the General. Perhaps he was afraid it might give offence to the allies, among whom, for ought we knew, it may be the custom of the country to believe a God. But if he argued, as some have done, upon a mistaken principle, that an officer who is guilty of speaking blasphemy, may, some time or other, proceed so far as to raise a mutiny; the consequence is by no means to be admitted: for surely the commander of an English army is like to be but ill obeyed, whose soldiers fear and reverence him as little as they do a Deity.

It is further objected against the gospel-system That it obliges men to the belief of things too difficult for freethinkers, and such as have shaken off the prejudices that usually cling to a confined education. To which I answer, That men should be cautious how they raise objections, which reflect upon the wisdom of the nation. Is not every body freely allowed to believe whatever he pleaseth, and to publish his belief to the world whenever he thinks fit, especially if it serves to strengthen the party which is in the right? Would any indifferent foreigner, who should read the trumpery lately written by Apgil, Tindal,

Toland, Coward *, and forty more, imagine the gospel to be our rule of faith, and confirmed by parliaments? Does any man either believe, or say he believes, or desire to have it thought that he says he believes one syllable of the matter? And is any man worse received upon that score; or does he find his want of *nominal* faith a disadvantage to him, in the pursuit of any civil or military employment? What if there be an old dormant statute or two against him? Are they not now obsolete, to a degree, that Empson and Dudley themselves, if they were now alive, would find it impossible to put them in execution?

It is likewise urged, That there are, by computation, in this kingdom, above ten thousand parsons; whose revenues added to those of my Lords the Bishops, would suffice to maintain, at least, two hundred young gentlemen of wit and pleasure, and free-thinking; enemies to priestcraft, narrow principles, pedantry, and prejudices; who might be an ornament to the court

* Asgal wrote an argument to prove, that man may be translated from hence into eternal life, without passing through death.

Toland published some deistical books.

Tindal's writings were blasphemous and atheistical.

Coward asserted the mortality of the soul, and alledged the seat of it to be in the blood. *Hawkes.*

and town: and then again, so great a number of able [bodied] divines might be a recruit to our fleet and armies. This indeed appears to be a consideration of some weight. But then, on the other side, several things deserve to be considered likewise: As, first, whether it may not be thought necessary, that in certain tracts of country, like what we call parishes, there should be *one* man, at least, of abilities to read and write. Then it seems a wrong computation, that the revenues of the church throughout this island, would be large enough to maintain two hundred young gentlemen, or even half that number after the present refined way of living; that is, to allow each of them such a rent, as, in the modern form of speech, would make them easy. But still there is in this project a greater mischief behind; and we ought to beware of the woman's folly, who killed the hen that every morning laid her a golden egg. For, pray, what will become of the race of men in the next age, if we had nothing to trust to, beside the scrophulous, consumptive productions furnished by our men of wit and pleasure; when, having squandered away their vigour, health, and estates, they are forced, by some disagreeable marriage, to piece up their broken fortunes, and entail rottenness and politeness on their posterity? Now, here

are ten thousand persons reduced, by the wise regulations of Henry VIII. to the necessity of a low-diet, and moderate exercise, who are the only great restorers of our breed; without which the nation would, in an age or two, become one great hospital.

Another advantage proposed by the abolishing of Christianity is, the clear gain of one day in seven, which is now entirely lost, and consequently the kingdom one seventh less considerable in trade, business, and pleasure; besides the loss to the public of so many stately structures now in the hands of the clergy; which might be converted into play-houses, market-houses, exchanges, common dormitories, and other public edifices.

I hope I shall be forgiven a hard word, if I call this a perfect cavil. I readily own there hath been an old custom, time out of mind, for people to assemble in the churches every Sunday; and that shops are still frequently shut, in order, as it is conceived, to preserve the memory of that ancient practice. But how this can prove a hindrance to business or pleasure, is hard to imagine. What if the men be forced, one day in the week, to game at home, instead of the *chocolatehouse*? Are not the *taverns* and *coffeehouses* open? Can there be a more convenient season for taking a

dose of physic? Are fewer claps got upon Sundays? Is not that the chief day for traders to sum up the accounts of the week; and for lawyers to prepare their briefs? But I would know, how it can be pretended, that the churches are misapplied? Where are more appointments and rendezvouses of gallantry? where are more care to appear in the foremost box, with greater advantage of dress? where more meetings for business? where more bargains driven of all sorts? and where so many conveniencies or incitements to sleep?

There is one advantage, greater than any of the foregoing, proposed by the abolishing of Christianity; That it will utterly extinguish parties among us, by removing those factious distinctions of *High and Low Church*, of *Whig and Tory*, *Presbyterian and Church of England*; which are now so many grievous clogs upon public proceedings, and are apt to dispose men to prefer the gratifying themselves, or depressing their adversaries, before the most important interest of the state.

I confess, if it were certain, that so great an advantage would redound to the nation by this expedient, I would submit, and be silent. But will any man say, that if the words *whoring, drinking, cheating, lying, stealing*, were, by act

of parliament, ejected out of the English tongue and dictionaries, we should all awake next morning chaste and temperate, honest and just, and lovers of truth? Is this a fair consequence? Or, if the physicians would forbid us to pronounce the words, *pox*, *gout*, *rheumatism*, and *stone*, would that expedient serve, like so many *talismans*, to destroy the diseases themselves? Are party and faction rooted in mens hearts no deeper than phrases borrowed from religion, or founded upon no firmer principles? And is our language so poor, that we cannot find other terms to express them? Are envy, pride, avarice, and ambition, such ill nomenclators, that they cannot furnish appellations for their owners? Will not *Heydukes* and *Mamalukes*, *Mandarines* and *Patshaws*, or any other words formed at pleasure, serve to distinguish those who are in the ministry, from others who would be in it if they could? What, for instance, is easier than to vary the form of speech? and, instead of the word *church*, make it a question in politics, whether the *monument* be in danger? Because religion was nearest at hand to furnish a few convenient phrases, is our invention so barren, we can find no other? Suppose, for argument's sake, that the *Tories* favoured *Margarita*, the *Whigs* Mrs. *Tofts*, and

the *Trimmers* Valentini*: would not *Margaritians*, *Toftians*, and *Valentinians*, be very tolerable marks of distinction? The *Prasini* and *Veniti*, two most virulent factions in Italy, began (if I remember right) by a distinction of colours in ribbands: and we might contend, with as good a grace, about the dignity of the *blue* and the *green*; which would serve as properly to divide the court, the parliament, and the kingdom between them, as any terms of art whatsoever borrowed from religion. And therefore I think there is little force in this objection against Christianity, or prospect of so great an advantage as is proposed in the abolishing of it.

It is again objected, as a very absurd ridiculous custom, That a set of men should be suffered, much less employed and hired, to bawl one day in seven, against the lawfulness of those methods most in use towards the pursuit of greatness, riches, and pleasure, which are the constant practice of all men alive on the other six. But this objection is, I think, a little unworthy so refined an age as ours. Let us argue this matter calmly. I appeal to the breast of any polite freethinker, whether, in the pursuit of gratifying a predominant passion, he hath not always

* Italian fingers then in vogue. Margarita was afterwards married to Dr. Pepusche.

felt a wonderful incitement, by reflecting it was a thing forbidden: and therefore we see, in order to cultivate this taste, the wisdom of the nation hath taken special care, that the ladies should be furnished with prohibited silks, and the men with prohibited wine. And indeed it were to be wished, that some other prohibitions were promoted, in order to improve the pleasures of the town; which, for want of such expedients, begin already, as I am told, to flag and grow languid, giving way daily to cruel inroads from the spleen.

It is likewise proposed, as a great advantage to the public, That if we once discard the system of the gospel, all religion will of course be banished for ever; and consequently, along with it, those grievous prejudices of education; which, under the names of *virtue*, *conscience*, *honour*, *justice*, and the like, are so apt to disturb the peace of human minds; and the notions whereof are so hard to be eradicated by right reason or freethinking, some times during the whole course of our lives.

Here, first, I observe how difficult it is to get rid of a phrase, which the world is once grown fond of, though the occasion that first produced it be entirely taken away. For several years past, if a man had but an ill-favoured nose, the deep-

thinkers of the age would, some way or other, contrive to impute the cause to the prejudice of his education. From this fountain are said to be derived all our foolish notions of justice, piety, love of our country; all our opinions of God, or a future state, heaven, hell, and the like: and there might formerly, perhaps, have been some pretence for this charge. But so effectual care hath been since taken to remove those prejudices, by an entire change in the methods of education, that (with honour I mention it to our polite innovators) the young gentlemen who are now on the scene, seem to have not the least tincture left of those infusions, or string of those weeds; and, by consequence, the reason for abolishing nominal Christianity upon that pretext, is wholly ceased.

For the rest, it may perhaps admit a controversy, whether the banishing all notions of religion whatsoever would be convenient for the vulgar. Not that I am, in the least, of opinion with those who hold religion to have been the invention of politicians, to keep the lower part of the world in awe, by the fear of invisible powers; unless mankind were then very different from what it is now: for I look upon the mass or body of our people here in England to be as free thinkers, that is to say, as stanch unbelievers, as any of

the highest rank. But I conceive some scattered notions about a superior power to be of singular use for the common people, as furnishing excellent materials to keep children quiet when they grow peevish, and providing topics of amusement in a tedious winter night.

Lastly, It is proposed, as a singular advantage, That the abolishing of Christianity will very much contribute to the uniting of *Protestants*, by enlarging the terms of communion, so as to take in all sorts of *dissenters*; who are now shut out of the pale upon account of a few ceremonies, which all sides confess to be things indifferent: That this alone will effectually answer the great ends of a scheme for comprehension, by opening a large noble gate, at which all bodies may enter; whereas the chaffering with *dissenters*, and dodging about this or the other ceremony, is but like opening a few wickets, and leaving them at jar, by which no more than one can get in at a time, and that not without stooping, and sideling, and squeezing his body.

To all this I answer, That there is one darling inclination of mankind, which usually affects to be a retainer to religion, though she be neither its parent, its godmother, or its friend; I mean the spirit of opposition, that lived long before Christianity, and can easily subsist without

it. Let us, for instance, examine wherein the opposition of sectaries among us consists. We shall find Christianity to have no share in it at all. Does the gospel any where prescribe a starched, squeezed, countenance, a stiff formal gait, a singularity of manners and habit, or any affected modes of speech, different from the reasonable part of mankind? Yet if Christianity did not lend its name to stand in the gap, and to employ or divert these humours, they must of necessity be spent in contraventions to the laws of the land, and disturbance of the public peace. There is a portion of enthusiasm assigned to every nation, which, if it hath not proper objects to work on, will burst out, and set all in a flame. If the quiet of a state can be bought by only flinging men a few ceremonies to devour, it is a purchase no wise man would refuse. Let the mastiffs amuse themselves about a sheep's skin stuffed with hay, provided it will keep them from worrying the flock. The institution of convents abroad seems in one point a strain of great wisdom; there being few irregularities in human passions, that may not have recourse to vent themselves in some of those orders; which are so many retreats for the speculative, the melancholy, the proud, the silent, the politic, and the morose, to spend themselves, and evaporate the noxious particles:

for each of whom we in this island are forced to provide several sects of religion, to keep them quiet. And whenever Christianity shall be abolished, the legislature must find some other expedient to employ and entertain them. For what imports it how large a gate you open, if there will be always left a number, who place a pride and a merit in refusing to enter?

Having thus considered the most important objections against Christianity, and the chief advantages proposed by the abolishing thereof; I shall now, with equal deference and submission to wiser judgments as before, proceed to mention a few inconveniencies that may happen, if the gospel should be repealed; which perhaps the projectors may not have sufficiently considered.

And, first, I am very sensible how much the gentlemen of wit and pleasure are apt to murmur, and be chocked at the sight of so many daggled-tail parsons, who happen to fall in their way, and offend their eyes. But at the same time these wise reformers do not consider, what an advantage and felicity it is, for great wits to be always provided with objects of scorn and contempt, in order to exercise and improve their talents, and divert their spleen from falling on each other, or on themselves; especially when

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all this may be done without the least imaginable danger to their persons.

And to urge another argument of a parallel nature: If Christianity were once abolished, how could the freethinkers, the strong reasoners, and the men of profound learning, be able to find another subject so calculated in all points whereon to display their abilities? What wonderful productions of wit should we be deprived of, from those whose genius, by continual practice hath been wholly turned upon raillery and invectives against religion, and would therefore never be able to distinguish themselves upon any other subject? We are daily complaining of the greatest, perhaps, the only topic we have left? Who would ever have suspected Apgil for a wit, or Toland for a philosopher, if the inexhaustible stock of Christianity had not been at hand to provide them with materials? What other subject through all art or nature could have produced Tindal for a profound author, or furnished him with readers? It is the wise choice of the subject that alone adorns and distinguishes the writer. For had an hundred such pens as these been employed on the side of religion, they would have immediately sunk into silence and oblivion.

Nor do I think it wholly groundless, or my fears altogether imaginary, that the abolishing of

Christianity may perhaps bring the church in danger, or at least put the senate to the trouble of another securing vote. I desire I may not be mistaken; I am far from presuming to affirm, or think, that the church is in danger at present, or as things now stand; but we know not how soon it may be so, when the Christian religion is repealed. As plausible as this project seems, there may be a dangerous design lurking under it. Nothing can be more notorious, than that the *Atheists*, *Deists*, *Socinians*, *Antitrinitarians*, and other subdivisions of freethinkers, are persons of little zeal for the present ecclesiastical establishment. Their declared opinion is for repealing the sacramental test; they are very indifferent with regard to ceremonies; nor do they hold the *jus divinum* of Episcopacy. Therefore this may be intended as one politic step towards altering the constitution of the church established, and setting up *Presbytery* in the stead; which I leave to be further considered by those at the helm.

In the last place, I think nothing can be more plain, than that, by this expedient, we shall run into the evil we chiefly pretend to avoid; and that the abolishment of the *Christian* religion, will be the readiest course we can take to introduce Popery. And I am the more inclined to this opinion, because we know it hath been the

constant practice of the *Jesuits*, to send over emissaries, with instructions to personate themselves members of the several prevailing sects among us. So it is recorded, that they have at sundry times appeared in the guise of *Presbyterians*, *Anabaptists*, *Independents*, and *Quakers*, according as any of these were most in credit: so, since the fashion hath been taken up of exploding religion, the *Popish* missionaries have not been wanting to mix with the freethinkers; among whom Toland, the great oracle of the *Anti christians*, is an Irish priest, the son of an Irish priest; and the most learned and ingenious author of a book called the *rights of the Christian church*, was, in a proper juncture, reconciled to the Romish faith; whose true son, as appears by a hundred passages in this treatise, he still continues. Perhaps I could add some others to the number: but the fact is beyond dispute. And the reasoning they proceed by is right: for supposing Christianity to be extinguished, the people will never be at ease till they find out some other method of worship; which will as infallibly produce superstition, as superstition will end in *Popery*.

And therefore, if, notwithstanding all I have said, it still be thought necessary to have a bill brought in for repealing Christianity, I would

humbly offer an amendment, that instead of the word *Christianity*, may be put *religion* in general; which, I conceive, will much better answer all the good ends proposed by the projectors of it. For as long as we leave in being a God and his providence, with all the necessary consequences which curious and inquisitive men will be apt to draw from such premises; we do not strike at the root of the evil, though we should ever so effectually annihilate the present scheme of the gospel. For of what use is freedom of thought, if it will not produce freedom of action; which is the sole end, how remote soever in appearance, of all objections against Christianity? and therefore the freethinkers consider it as a mutual dependance on each other, that, if you happen to pull out one single nail, the whole fabric must fall to the ground. This was happily expressed by him, who had heard of a text brought for proof of the Trinity, which in an ancient manuscript was differently read; he thereupon immediately took the hint, and, by a sudden destruction of a long *forites* *, most logically concluded, Why, if it be as you say, I may safely whore

* A *forites* differs from a syllogism, in that it takes only the minor proposition. An example of this figure may be seen, vol. 5. in John Bull, part 2. chap. 17. near the end. *Hawkes*.

and drink on, and defy the parson. From which, and many the like instances, easy to be produced, I think nothing can be more manifest, than that the quarrel is not against any particular points of hard digestion in the Christian system; but against religion in general; which, by laying restraints on human nature, is supposed the great enemy to the freedom of thought and action.

Upon the whole, if it shall still be thought for the benefit of church and state, that Christianity be abolished; I conceive, however, it may be more convenient to defer the execution to a time of peace; and not venture in this conjuncture to disoblige our allies; who, as it falls out, are all Christians; and many of them, by the prejudices of their education, so bigotted, as to place a sort of pride in the appellation. If, upon being rejected by them, we are to trust to an alliance with the Turk, we shall find ourselves much deceived: for as he is too remote, and generally engaged in war with the Persian Emperor, so his people would be more scandalized at our infidelity, than our Christian neighbours. For the Turks are not only strict observers of religious worship; but, what is worse, believe a God; which is more than is required of us, even while we preserve the name of Christians.

To conclude: Whatever some may think of the great advantages to trade by this favourite scheme, I do very much apprehend, that in six months time after the act is passed for the extirpation of the gospel, the Bank and East-India stock may fall, at least, one *per cent.* And since that is fifty times more than ever the wisdom of our age thought fit to venture for the *preservation* of Christianity, there is no reason we should be at so great a loss merely for the sake of *destroying* it.



MISCELLANY VI,

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P R O J E C T

F O R T H E

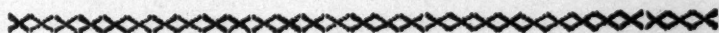
Advancement of RELIGION.

A N D T H E

REFORMATION of MANNERS.

By a PERSON of QUALITY.

Written in the Year 1709.



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F O R T H E
Advancement of RELIGION and
the Reformation of MANNERS.*
To the Countess of B E R K L E Y †.

M A D A M,

MY intention in prefixing your Ladyship's name, is not, after the common form, to desire your protection of the following papers;

* The author appears in earnest throughout this whole treatise; and the dedication, or introduction, is in a strain of serious panegyric, which the Lady to whom it is addressed, undoubtedly deserved. But as the pamphlet is of the satirical kind, I am apt to imagine, that the Dean put a violence upon himself, in chusing to appear candidly serious, rather than to smile under his usual mask of gravity. Methinks, upon these occasions, I perceive him writing in shackles. *Orrery.*

In the *Project*, &c. Dr. Swift appears in the character of a great inspired prophet. *He crieth aloud, he spareth not, he listeth up his voice like a trumpet*, Isa. lviii. 1. He rebuketh all ranks of men for their depravities and corruptions, their profaneness, their blasphemy and irreligion. His discourse he addresseth unto his sovereign, and, beyond all contra-

which I take to be a very unreasonable request; since, by being inscribed to your Ladyship, though without your knowlege, and from a concealed hand, you cannot recommend them without some suspicion of partiality. My real design is, I confess, the very same I have often detested in most dedications; that of publishing your praises to the world; not upon the subject of your noble birth, for I know others as noble; or of the greatness of your fortune, for I know others far greater; or of that beautiful race, (the images of their parents), which calls you mother; for even this may perhaps have been equalled in some other age or country. Besides, none of these advantages do derive any accomplishments to the owners, but serve, at best only to adorn what they really possess. What I intend, is your piety, truth, good sense, and good nature, af-

diction, proveth it to be an important duty incumbent on all princes, to encourage and to enforce morals and religion, by exerting their utmost authority. He then applieth himself to the legislature, conjuring them to forward so noble a design, and to provide remedies against that torrent of iniquity, which, if not vigorously opposed, would certainly increase, and never stop in its career, until it subverted the constitution. And, finally, he declares, in the prophetic style and spirit, that a reformation of manners, and turning unto God, are the best natural as well as religious means, to bring the war to an happy conclusion. *Swift.*

† This excellent Lady, was Elisabeth, the daughter of Baptist Noel, Viscount Campden, and sister to Edward Earl of Gainsborough. *Hawkes.*

fability, and charity; wherein I wish your Ladyship might have had a chance to escape this address. In the mean time, I think it highly necessary, for the interest of virtue and religion, that the whole kindom should be informed in some parts of your character; for instance, That the easiest and politest conversation, joined with the truest piety, may be observed in your Ladyship, in as great perfection as they were ever seen a part in any other persons: That, by your prudent management under several disadvantages, you have preserved the lustre of that most noble family into which you are grafted, and which the unmeasurable profusion of ancestors, for many generations, had too much eclipsed: Then how happily you perform every office of life, to which Providence hath called you; in the education of those two incomparable daughters, whose conduct is so universally admired; in every duty of a prudent, complying, affectionate wife; in that care which descends to the meanest of your domestics; and, lastly, in that endless bounty to the poor, and discretion where to distribute it. I insist on my opinion, that it is of importance for the public, to know this, and a great deal more of your Ladyship; yet whoever goes about to inform them, shall, instead of finding credit, perhaps be censured for a flatterer. To avoid so

usual a reproach, I declare this to be no dedication, but merely an introduction to a proposal for the advancement of religion and morals, by tracing, however imperfectly, some few lineaments in the character of a Lady, who hath spent all her life in the practice and promotion of both.

AMONG all the schemes offered to the public in this projecting age, I have observed, with some displeasure, that there have never been any for the improvement of religion and morals; which, besides the piety of the design from the consequence of such a reformation in a future life, would be the best natural means for advancing the public felicity of the state, as well as the present happiness of every individual. For as much as faith and morality are declined among us, I am altogether confident, they might, in a short time, and with no very great trouble, be raised to as high a perfection as numbers are capable of receiving. Indeed the method is so easy and obvious, and some present opportunities so good, that, in order to have this project reduced to practice, there seems to want nothing more than to put those in mind, who, by their honour, duty, and interest, are chiefly concerned.

But because it is idle to propose remedies be-

fore we are assured of the disease, or to be in fear till we are convinced of the danger; I shall first shew in general, that the nation is extremely corrupted in religion and morals; and then I will offer a short scheme for the reformation of both.

As to the first, I know it is reckoned but a form of speech, when divines complain of the wickedness of the age. However, I believe, upon a fair comparison with other times and countries, it would be found an undoubted truth.

For, first, to deliver nothing but plain matter of fact, without exaggeration or satire, I suppose it will be granted, that hardly one in a hundred among our people of quality or gentry appears to act by any principle of religion; that great numbers of them do entirely discard it, and are ready to own their disbelief of all revelation in ordinary discourse. Nor is the case much better among the vulgar, especially in great towns, where the profaneness and ignorance of handicraftsmen, small traders, servants, and the like, are to a degree very hard to be imagined greater. Then it is observed abroad, that no race of mortals hath so little sense of religion, as the English soldiers. To confirm which, I have been often told by great officers of the army, that, in the whole compass of their acquaintance, they

could not recollect three of their profession, who seemed to regard or believe one syllable of the gospel. And the same at least may be affirmed of the fleet. The consequences of all which upon the actions of men, are equally manifest. They never go about, as in former times, to hide or palliate their vices, but expose them freely to view, like any other common occurrences of life, without the least reproach from the world or themselves. For instance, any man will tell you, he intends to be drunk this evening, or was so last night, with as little ceremony or scruple, as he would tell you the time of the day. He will let you know he is going to a wench, or that he has got a clap, with as much indifferency, as he would a piece of public news. He will swear, curse, or blaspheme, without the least passion or provocation. And though all regard for reputation is not quite laid aside in the other sex, it is however at so low an ebb, that very few among them seem to think virtue and conduct of any necessity for preserving it. If this be not so, how comes it to pass, that women of tainted reputations find the same countenance and reception in all public places, with those of the nicest virtue, who pay and receive visits from them without any manner of scruple? Which proceeding, as it is not very old among us, so I take it to be

of most pernicious consequence. It looks like a sort of compounding between virtue and vice ; as if a woman were allowed to be vicious, provided she be not a profligate ; as if there were a certain point where gallantry ends, and infamy begins : or that an hundred criminal amours were not as pardonable as half a score.

Besides those corruptions already mentioned, it would be endless to enumerate such as arise from the excess of play or gaming ; the cheats, the quarrels, the oaths, and blasphemies among the men ; among the women, the neglect of household-affairs, the unlimited freedoms, the indecent passion ; and, lastly, the known inlet to all lewdness, when after an ill run the *person* must answer the defects of the *purse* : the rule on such occasions holding true in play, as it does in law, *Quod non habet in crumena, luat in corpore*.

But all these are trifles in comparison, if we step into other scenes, and consider the fraud and cozenage of trading men and shopkeepers ; that insatiable gulf of injustice and oppression, the *law* ; the open traffic for all civil and military employments, (I wish it rested there *), without the least regard to merit or qualifications ; the corrupt management of men in office ; the

* Perhaps the author intended to intimate that it extended to ecclesiastical. *Harwkef.*

many detestable abuses in chusing those who represent the people; with the management of interests and factions among the representatives: to which I must be bold to add, the ignorance of some of the lower clergy: the mean servile temper of others; the pert pragmatistical demeanor of several young stagers in divinity, upon their first producing themselves into the world; with many other circumstances needless, or rather invidious to mention; which falling in with the corruptions already related, have, however unjustly, almost rendered the whole order contemptible.

This is a short view of the general depravities among us, without entering into particulars, which would be an endless labour. Now, as universal and deep-rooted as these appear to be, I am utterly deceived, if an effectual remedy might not be applied to most of them; neither am I at present upon a wild speculative project, but such a one as may be easily put in execution.

For, while the prerogative of giving all employments continues in the crown, either immediately, or by subordination, it is in the power of the *prince* to make piety and virtue become the fashion of the age, if at the same time he would make them necessary qualifications for favour and preferment.

It is clear from present experience, that the

bare example of the best prince will not have any mighty influence, where the age is very corrupt. For when was there ever a better prince on the throne than the present Queen? I do not talk of her talent for government, her love of the people, or any other qualities that are purely regal; but her piety, charity, temperance, conjugal love, and whatever other virtues do best adorn a private life; wherein, without question or flattery, she hath no superior: yet neither will it be satire, or peevish invective, to affirm, that infidelity and vice are not much diminished since her coming to the crown; nor will, in probability, till more effectual remedies be provided.

Thus human nature seems to lie under the disadvantage, that the example alone of a vitious prince will in time corrupt an age, but the example of a good one will not be sufficient to reform it, without further endeavours. Princes must therefore supply this defect by a vigorous exercise of that authority which the law has left them, by making it every man's interest and honour to cultivate religion and virtue, by rendering vice a disgrace, and the certain ruin to preferment or pretensions: all which they should first attempt in their own courts and families. For instance, might not the Queen's domestics of the middle and lower sort be obliged, upon pe-

nalty of suspension or loss of their employments, to a constant weekly attendance on the service of the church: to a decent behaviour in it; to receive the sacrament four times a-year; to avoid swearing, and irreligious profane discourses, and to the appearance at least of temperance and chastity? Might not the care of all this be committed to the strict inspection of proper officers? Might not those of higher rank, and nearer access to her Majesty, receive her own commands, to the same purpose, and be countenanced or disfavoured according as they obey? Might not the Queen lay her injunctions on the bishops, and other great men of undoubted piety, to make diligent inquiry, and give her notice, if any person about her should happen to be of libertine principles or morals? Might not all those who enter upon any office in her Majesty's family, be obliged to take an oath parallel with that against simony, which is administered to the clergy? It is not to be doubted, but that if these or the like proceedings were duly observed, morality and religion would soon become fashionable court-virtues, and be taken up as the only methods to get or keep employments there; which alone would have mighty influence upon many of the nobility and principal gentry.

But if the like methods were pursued as far as

possible, with regard to those who are in the great employments of state, it is hard to conceive how general a reformation they might in time produce among us. For if piety and virtue were once reckoned qualifications necessary to preferment, every man thus endowed, when put into great stations, would readily imitate the Queen's example in the distribution of all offices in his disposal; especially if any apparent transgression, through favour or partiality, would be imputed to him for a misdemeanour, by which he must certainly forfeit his favour and station. And there being such great numbers in employment, scattered through every town and country in this kingdom, if all these were exemplary in the conduct of their lives, things would soon take a new face, and religion receive a mighty encouragement. Nor would the public weal be less advanced; since of nine offices in ten that are ill executed, the defect is not in capacity or understanding, but in common honesty. I know no employment, for which piety disqualifies any man: and if it did, I doubt the objection would not be very seasonably offered at present; because it is perhaps too just a reflection, that, in the disposal of places, the question, whether a person be *fit* for what he is recommended to? is generally the last that is thought on or regarded.

I have often imagined, that something parallel to the office of censors anciently in Rome, would be of mighty use among us, and could be easily limited from running into any exorbitances. The Romans understood liberty at least as well as we, were as jealous of it, and upon every occasion as bold asserters: yet I do not remember to have read any great complaints of the abuses in that office among them; but many admirable effects of it are left upon record. There are several pernicious vices frequent and notorious among us, that escape or elude the punishment of any law at all against them; such as atheism, drunkenness, fraud, avarice, and several others; which, by this institution, wisely regulated, might be much reformed. Suppose, for instance, that itinerary commissioners were appointed to inspect, every where throughout the kingdom, into the conduct (at least) of men in office, with respect to their morals and religion, as well as their abilities; to receive the complaints and informations that should be offered against them, and make their report here upon oath to the court or the ministry, who should reward or punish accordingly. I avoid entering into the particulars of this or any other scheme; which coming from a private hand, might be liable to many defects, but would soon be digested by the wisdom of the na-

tion. And, surely, six thousand pounds a year would not be ill laid out among as many commissioners duly qualified, who in three divisions should be personally obliged to take their yearly circuits for that purpose.

But this is beside my present design; which was only to shew what degree of reformation is in the power of the Queen, without the interposition of the legislature; and which her Majesty is, without question, obliged in conscience to endeavour by her authority, as much as she doth by her practice.

It will be easily granted, that the example of this great town hath a mighty influence over the whole kingdom; and it is as manifest, that the town is equally influenced by the court, and the ministry, and those who, by their employments or their hopes, depend upon them. Now, if under so excellent a princess as the present Queen, we would suppose a family strictly regulated, as I have above proposed; a ministry where every single person was of distinguished piety; if we should suppose all great offices of state and law filled after the same manner, and with such as were equally diligent in chusing persons, who, in their several subordinations, would be obliged to follow the examples of their superiors, under the penalty of loss of favour and place; will not

every body grant, that the empire of vice and irreligion would be soon destroyed in this metropolis, and receive a terrible blow through the whole island, which hath so great an intercourse with it, and so much affects to follow its fashions?

For, if religion were once understood to be the necessary step to favour and preferment, can it be imagined that any would openly offend against it, who had the least regard for his reputation or his fortune? There is no quality so contrary to any nature, which men cannot affect, and put on upon occasion, in order to serve an interest, or gratify a prevailing passion. The proudest man will personate humility, the morosest learn to flatter, the laziest will be sedulous and active, where he is in pursuit of what he hath much at heart: how ready therefore would most men be to step into the paths of virtue and piety, if they infallibly led to favour and fortune!

If swearing and profaneness, scandalous and avowed lewdness, excessive gaming and intemperance, were a little discountenanced in the army, I cannot readily see what ill consequences could be apprehended. If gentlemen of that profession were at least obliged to some external decorum in their conduct; or even if a profligate life and character were not a means of advance-

ment, and the appearance of piety a most infallible hinderance, it is impossible the corruptions there should be so universal and exorbitant. I have been assured by several great officers, that no troops abroad are so ill disciplined as the English; which cannot well be otherwise, while the common soldiers have perpetually before their eyes, the vitious example of their leaders; and it is hardly possible for those to commit any crime, whereof these are not infinitely more guilty, and with less temptation.

It is commonly charged upon the gentlemen of the army, that the beastly vice of drinking to excess hath been lately, from their example, restored among us; which for some years before was almost dropt in England. But, whoever the introducers were, they have succeeded to a miracle; many of the young nobility and gentry are already become great proficient, and are under no manner of concern to hide their talent, but are got beyond all sense of shame, or fear of reproach.

This might soon be remedied, if the Queen would think fit to declare, that no young person of quality whatsoever, who was notoriously addicted to that or any other vice, should be capable of her favour, or even admitted into her presence; with positive command to her ministers,

and others in great office, to treat them in the same manner: after which, all men who had any regard for their reputation, or any prospect of preferment, would avoid their commerce. This would quickly make that vice so scandalous, that those who could not subdue, would at least endeavour to disguise it.

By the like methods a stop might be put to that ruinous practice of deep gaming: and the reason why it prevails so much, is, because a treatment *directly opposite* in every point is made use of to promote it; by which means the laws enacted against this abuse are wholly eluded.

It cannot be denied, that the want of strict discipline in the universities hath been of pernicious consequence to the youth of this nation, who are there almost left entirely to their own management, especially those among them of better quality and fortune; who, because they are not under a necessity of making learning their maintenance, are easily allowed to pass their time, and take their degrees with little or no improvement. Than which there cannot well be a greater absurdity. For if no advancement of knowledge can be had from those places, the time there spent is at best utterly lost, because every ornamental part of education is better taught elsewhere. And as for keeping youths out of harm's way, I

doubt, where so many of them are got together, at full liberty of doing what they please, it will not answer the end. But whatever abuses, corruptious, or deviations from statutes have crept into the universities through neglect, or length of time, they might in a great degree be reformed, by strict injunctions from court (upon each particular) to the visitors and heads of houses; besides the peculiar authority the Queen may have in several colleges, whereof her predecessors were the founders. And among other regulations, it would be very convenient to prevent the excess of drinking, with that scurvy custom among the lads, and parent of the former vice, the taking of tobacco, where it is not absolutely necessary in point of health.

From the Universities the young nobility, and others of great fortunes, are sent for early up to town, for fear of contracting any airs of pedantry by a college-education. Many of the younger gentry retire to the inns of the court, where they are wholly left to their own discretion. And the consequence of their remissness in education appears by observing, that nine in ten of those who rise in the church or the court, the law or the army, are younger brothers, or new men, whose narrow fortunes have forced them upon industry and application.

As for the inns of court, unless we suppose them to be much degenerated, they must needs be the worse instituted seminaries in any Christian country; but whether they may be corrected without interposition of the legislature, I have not skill enough to determine. However, it is certain, that all wise nations have agreed in the necessity of a strict education; which consisted, among other things, in the observance of moral duties, especially justice, temperance, and chastity, as well as the knowledge of arts, and bodily exercises. But all these among us are laughed out of doors.

Without the least intention to offend the clergy, I cannot but think, that, through a mistaken notion and practice, they prevent themselves from doing much service, which otherwise might lie in their power, to religion and virtue: I mean, by affecting so much to converse with each other, and caring so little to mingle with the laity. They have their particular clubs, and particular coffee-houses, where they generally appear in clusters. A single divine dares hardly shew his person among numbers of fine gentlemen; or if he happens to fall into such company, he is silent and suspicious, in continual apprehension that some pert man of pleasure should break an unmannerly jest, and render him ridiculous. Now, I take

this behaviour of the clergy to be just as reasonable, as if the physicians should agree to spend their time in visiting one another, or their several apothecaries, and leave their patients to shift for themselves. In my humble opinion, the clergy's business lies entirely among the laity: neither is there perhaps a more effectual way to forward the salvation of mens souls, than for spiritual persons to make themselves as agreeable as they can in the conversations of the world; for which a learned education gives them great advantage, if they would please to improve and apply it. It so happens, that the *men of pleasure*, who never go to church, nor use themselves to read books of devotion, form their ideas of the clergy, from a few poor strollers they often observe in the streets, or sneaking out of some person of quality's house, where they are hired by the lady at ten shillings a-month: while those of better figure and parts do seldom appear to correct these notions. And let some reasoners think what they please, it is certain, that men must be brought to esteem and love the clergy, before they can be persuaded to be in love with religion. No man values the best medicine, if administered by a physician, whose person he hates or despises. If the clergy were as forward to appear in all companies, as other gentlemen, and would a

little study the arts of conversation, to make themselves agreeable, they might be welcome to every party, where there was the least regard for politeness or good sense; and consequently prevent a thousand vitious or profane discourses, as well as actions: neither would men of understanding complain, that a clergyman was a constraint upon the company, because they could not speak blasphemy or obscene jests before him. While the people are so jealous of the clergy's ambition, as to abhor all thoughts of the return of ecclesiastic discipline among them, I do not see any other method left for men of that function to take, in order to reform the world, than by using all honest arts to make themselves acceptable to the laity. This, no doubt, is part of that wisdom of the serpent, which the author of Christianity directs; and is the very method used by St. Paul, who *became all things to all men, to the Jews a Jew, and a Greek to the Greeks.*

How to remedy these inconveniences, may be a matter of some difficulty; since the clergy seem to be of an opinion, that this humour of sequestering themselves is a part of their duty; nay, as I remember, they have been told so by some of their bishops in their pastoral letters, particularly by *one** among them of great merit and distinc-

* Supposed to be Dr. Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury.

tion; who yet, in his own practice, hath all his life-time taken a course directly contrary. But I am deceived, if an aukward shame, and fear of ill usage from the laity, have not a greater share in this mistaken conduct, than their own inclinations. However, if the outward profession of religion and virtue were once in practice and countenance at court, as well as among all men in office, or who have any hopes or dependence for preferment, a good treatment of the clergy would be the necessary consequence of such a reformation; and they would soon be wise enough to see their own duty and interest, in qualifying themselves for lay conversation, when once they were out of fear of being choked by ribaldry or profaneness.

There is one further circumstance upon this occasion, which I know not whether it will be very orthodox to mention. The clergy are the only set of men among us, who constantly wear a distinct habit from others: the consequence of which (not in reason, but in fact) is this, that as long as any scandalous persons appear in that dress, it will continue, in some degree, a general mark of contempt. Whoever happens to see a *scoundrel in a gown*, reeling home at midnight, (a sight neither frequent or miraculous), is apt to entertain an ill idea of the whole order, and at the same

time to be extremely comforted in his own vices. Some remedy might be put to this, if those straggling gentlemen, who come up to town to *seek their fortunes*, were fairly dismissed to the West Indies; where there is work enough, and where some better provision should be made for them, than I doubt there is at present. Or, what if no person were allowed to wear the habit, who had not some preferment in the church; or at least some temporal fortune sufficient to keep him out of contempt? though, in my opinion, it were infinitely better, if all the clergy (except the bishops) were permitted to appear like other men of the graver sort, unless at those seasons when they are doing the business of their functions.

There is one abuse in this town, which wonderfully contributes to the promotion of vice; that such men are often put into the commission of the peace, whose interest it is, that virtue should be utterly banished from among us; who maintain, or at least enrich themselves by encouraging the grossest immoralities; to whom all the *barrows* of the *ward* pay contribution for shelter and protection from the laws. Thus these worthy magistrates, instead of lessening enormities, are the occasion of just twice as much debauchery as there would be without them. For those infamous women are forced upon doubling their

work and industry, to answer double charges, of paying the justice, and supporting themselves; like thieves who escape the gallows, and are let out to steal, in order to discharge the gaoler's fees.

It is not to be questioned, but the Queen and ministry might easily redress this abominable grievance, by enlarging the number of justices of the peace, by endeavouring to chuse men of virtuous principles, by admitting none who have not considerable fortunes; perhaps, by receiving into the number some of the most eminent clergy: then, by forcing all of them, upon severe penalties, to act when there is occasion, and not permitting any who are offered to refuse the commission. But in these two last cases, which are very material, I doubt there will be need of the legislature.

The reformation of the stage is entirely in the power of the Queen; and in the consequences it hath upon the minds of young people, doth very well deserve the strictest care. Besides the indecent and profane passages; besides the perpetual turning into ridicule the very function of the priesthood, with other irregularities, in most modern comedies, which have been often objected to them; it is worth observing the distributive justice of the authors, which is constantly appli-

ed to the punishment of virtue, and the reward of vice ; directly opposite to the rules of their best critics, as well as to the practice of dramatic poets in all other ages and countries. For example, a country-'squire, who is represented with no other vice but that of being a clown, and having the provincial accent upon his tongue, which is neither a fault, nor in his power to remedy, must be condemned to marry a cast wench, or a cracked chambermaid. On the other side, a rake-hell of the town, whose character is set off with no other accomplishment but excessive prodigality, profaneness, intemperance, and lust, is rewarded with a lady of great fortune to repair his own, which his vices had almost ruined. And as, in a tragedy, the hero is represented to have obtained many victories, in order to raise his character in the minds of the spectators ; so the hero of a comedy is represented to have been victorious in all his intrigues, for the same reason. I do not remember, that our English poets ever suffered a criminal amour to succeed upon the stage, till the reign of King Charles II. Ever since that time, the alderman is made a cuckold, the deluded virgin is debauched, and adultery and fornication are supposed to be committed behind the scenes, as part of the action. These, and many more corruptions of the theatre, peculiar

to our age and nation, need continue no longer, than while the court is content to connive at or neglect them. Surely a pension would not be ill employed on some men of wit, learning, and virtue, who might have power to strike out every offensive or unbecoming passage from plays already written, as well as those that may be offered to the stage for the future. By which, and other wise regulations, the theatre might become a very innocent and useful diversion, instead of being a scandal and reproach to our religion and country.

The proposals I have hitherto made for the advancement of religion and morality, are such as come within the reach of the administration; such as a pious active prince, with a steady resolution, might soon bring to effect. Neither am I aware of any objections to be raised against what I have advanced; unless it should be thought, that the making religion a necessary step to interest and favour, might increase hypocrisy among us: and I readily believe it would. But if one in twenty should be brought over to true piety, by this or the like methods, and the other nineteen be only hypocrites, the advantage would still be great. Besides, hypocrisy is much more eligible, than open infidelity and vice: it wears the livery of religion; it acknowledges her authority, and is

cautious of giving scandal. Nay, a long continued disguise is too great a constraint upon human nature, especially an English disposition. Men would leave off their vices out of mere weariness, rather than undergo the toil and hazard, and perhaps the expence of the practising them perpetually in private. And I believe it is often with religion as it is with love; which, by much dissembling, at last grows real.

All other projects to this great end have proved hitherto ineffectual. Laws against immorality have not been executed; and proclamations occasionally issued out to enforce them, are wholly unregarded, as things of form. Religious societies, though begun with excellent intention, and by persons of true piety, are said, I know not whether truly or no, to have dwindled into factious clubs, and grown a trade to enrich little knavish informers of the meanest rank, such as common constables and broken shopkeepers.

And that some effectual attempt should be made toward such a reformation, is perhaps more necessary than people commonly apprehend; because the ruin of a state is generally preceeded by an universal degeneracy of manners, and contempt of religion; which is entirely our case at present.

Diis te minorem quod geris, imperas. Hor.

Neither is this a matter to be deferred, till a more convenient time of peace and leisure. A reformation in mens faith and morals, is the best natural, as well as religious means, to bring the war to a good conclusion: because, if men in trust performed their duty for conscience sake, affairs would not suffer through fraud, falsehood, and neglect, as they now perpetually do. And if they believed a God, and his providence, and acted accordingly, they might reasonably hope for his divine assistance in so just a cause as ours.

Nor could the majesty of the English crown appear, upon any occasion, in a greater lustre, either to foreigners or subjects, than by an administration, which, producing such great effects, would discover so much power. And power being the natural appetite of princes, a limited monarch cannot so well gratify it in any thing, as a strict execution of the laws.

Besides, all parties would be obliged to close with so good a work as this, for their own reputation. Neither is any expedient more likely to unite them. For the most violent partymen I have ever observed, are such as, in the conduct of their lives, have discovered least sense of religion and morality; and when all such are laid aside, at least those among them who shall be

found incorrigible, it will be a matter perhaps of no great difficulty to reconcile the rest.

The many corruptions at present in every branch of business, are almost inconceivable. I have heard it computed by skilful persons, that of six millions raised every year for the service of the public, one third, at least, is sunk and intercepted through the several classes and subordinations of artful men in office, before the remainder is applied to the proper use. This is an accidental ill effect of our freedom. And while such men are in trust, who have no check from within, nor any views but towards their interest, there is no other fence against them, but the certainty of being hanged upon the first discovery, by the arbitrary will of an unlimited monarch, or his *vizier*. Among us the only danger to be apprehended, is the loss of an employment; and that danger is to be eluded a thousand ways. Besides, when fraud is great, if the crime be so flagrant, that a man is laid aside out of perfect shame, (which rarely happens), he retires loaded with the spoils of the nation; *et fruitur diis iratis*. I could name a commission, where several persons, out of a salary of five hundred pounds, without other visible revenues, have always lived at the rate of two thousand, and laid out forty or fifty thousand upon purchases of land or an-

nuities. An hundred other instances of the same kind might easily be produced. What remedy therefore can be found against such grievances in a constitution like ours, but to bring religion into countenance, and encourage those, who, from the hope of future reward, and dread of future punishment, will be moved to act with justice and integrity?

This is not to be accomplished any other way, than by introducing religion as much as possible to be the turn and fashion of the age; which only lies in the power of the administration; the prince with utmost strictness regulating the court, the ministry, and other persons in great employment; and these, by their example and authority, reforming all who have dependence on them.

It is certain, that a reformation successfully carried on in this great town, would, in time, spread itself over the whole kingdom; since most of the considerable youth pass here that season of their lives, wherein the strongest impressions are made, in order to improve their education, or advance their fortune; and those among them who return into their several countries, are sure to be followed and imitated, as the greatest patterns of wit and good breeding.

And if things were once in this train; that is, if virtue and religion were established as the ne-

cessary titles to reputation and preferment; and if vice and infidelity were not only loaden with infamy, but made the infallible ruin of all mens pretensions; our duty, by becoming our interest, would take root in our natures, and mix with the very genius of our people; so that it would not be easy for the example of one wicked prince to bring us back to our former corruptions.

I have confined myself (as it is before observed) to those methods for the advancement of piety, which are in the power of a prince limited like ours, by a strict execution of the laws already in force. And this is enough for a project that comes without any name or recommendation; I doubt a great deal more, than will be suddenly reduced into practice. Though, if any disposition should appear towards so good a work, is is certain, that the assistance of the legislative power would be necessary to make it more complete. I will instance only a few particulars.

In order to reform the vices of this town, which, as we have said, hath so mighty an influence on the whole kingdom, it would be very instrumental to have a law made, that all taverns and alehouses should be obliged to dismiss their company by twelve at night, and shut up their doors; and that no woman should be suffered to

enter any tavern or alehouse upon any pretence whatsoever. It is easy to conceive, what a number of ill consequences such a law would prevent; the mischiefs of quarrels, and lewdness, and thefts, and midnight-brawls, the diseases of intemperance and venery, and a thousand other evils needless to mention. Nor would it be amiss, if the masters of those public houses were obliged, upon the severest penalties, to give only a proportioned quantity of drink to every company; and when he found his guests disordered with excess, to refuse them any more.

I believe there is hardly a nation in Christendom, where all kind of fraud is practised in so unmeasurable a degree as with us. The lawyer, the tradesman, the mechanic, have found so many arts to deceive in their several callings, that they far outgrow the common prudence of mankind, which is in no sort able to fence against them. Neither could the legislature in any thing more consult the public good, than by providing some effectual remedy against this evil; which in several cases deserves greater punishment, than many crimes that are capital among us. The vintner, who, by mixing poison with his wine, destroys more lives than any malignant disease; the lawyer, who persuades you to a purchase, which he knows is mortgaged for more

than the worth, to the ruin of you and your family; the banker or scrivener, who takes all your fortune, to dispose of, when he was beforehand resolved to break the following day, do surely deserve the gallows much better than the wretch who is carried there for stealing a horse.

It cannot easily be answered to God or man, why a law is not made for limiting the press; at least so far as to prevent the publishing of such pernicious books, as, under pretence of *free-thinking*, endeavour to overthrow those tenets in religion, which have been held inviolable almost in all ages, by every sect that pretends to be Christian; and cannot therefore, with any colour of reason, be called *points in controversy*, or *matters of speculation*, as some would pretend. The doctrine of the *Trinity*, the *divinity of Christ*, the *immortality of the soul*, and even the truth of all *revelation*, are daily exploded and denied in books openly printed; though it is to be supposed, neither party* avow such principles, or own the supporting of them to be any way necessary to their service.

It would be endless to set down every corruption or defect which requires a remedy from the

* Neither Whig nor Tory. *Hawkes.*

legislative power. Senates are like to have little regard for any proposals that come from without doors; though, under a due sense of my own inabilities, I am fully convinced, that the unbiaſed thoughts of an honeſt and wiſe man, employed on the good of his country, may be better digeſted, than the reſults of a multitude, where faction and intereſt too often prevail; as a ſingle guide may direct the way, better than hundreds who *have contrary views, or look aſquint, or ſhut their eyes.*

I ſhall therefore mention but one more particular, which I think the parliament ought to take under conſideration; whether it be not a ſhame to our country, and a ſcandal to Chriſtianity, that in many towns, where there is a prodigious increaſe in the number of houſes and inhabitants, ſo little care ſhall be taken for the building of churches, that five parts in ſix of the people are abſolutely hindered from hearing divine ſervice? particularly here in London*, where a ſingle miniſter, with one or two ſorry curates, hath the care ſometimes of above twenty thouſand ſouls incumbent on him. A neglect of religion ſo ig-

* This paragraph is known to have given the firſt hint to certain Biſhops, particularly to Biſhop Atterbury, in the Earl of Oxford's miniſtry, to procure a fund for building fifty new churches in London.

nominious, in my opinion, that it can hardly be equalled in any civilized age or country.

But, to leave these airy imaginations of introducing new laws for the amendment of mankind; what I principally insist on, is a due execution of the old, which lies wholly in the crown, and in the authority derived from thence. I return therefore to my former assertion, That if stations of power, trust, profit, and honour, were constantly made rewards of virtue and piety, such an administration must needs have 'a mighty influence on the morals of the whole kingdom: and men of great abilities would *then* endeavour to excel in the duties of a religious life, in order to qualify themselves for public service. I may possibly be wrong in some of the means I prescribe towards this end; but that is no material objection against the design itself. Let those who are at the helm contrive it better, which perhaps they may easily do. Every body will agree, that the disease is manifest, as well as dangerous; that some remedy is necessary, and that none yet applied hath been effectual; which is a sufficient excuse for any man who wishes well to his country, to offer his thoughts, when he can have no other end in view but the public good. The present Queen is a princess of as many and great virtues as ever filled a

throne: how would it brighten her character to the present and after ages, if she would exert her utmost authority to instil some share of those virtues into her people, which they are too degenerate to learn only from her example? and, be it spoke with all the veneration possible for so excellent a sovereign, her best endeavours in this weighty affair are a most important part of her duty, as well as of her interest, and her honour.

But it must be confessed, that, as things are now, every man thinks he has laid in a sufficient stock of merit, and may pretend to any employment, provided he hath been loud and frequent in declaring himself hearty for the government. It is true, he is a *man of pleasure*, and a *free-thinker*; that is, in other words, he is profligate in his morals, and a despiser of religion; but in point of party, he is one to be *confided* in; he is an asserter of liberty and property; he rattles it out against *Poper*y and *arbitrary power*, and *priestcraft* and *high-church*. It is enough; he is a person fully qualified for any employment in the court or the navy, the law or the revenue; where he will be sure to leave no arts untried of bribery, fraud, injustice, or oppression, that he can practise with any hope of impunity. No wonder such men are true to a government, where

liberty runs high, where property, *however attained*, is so well secured, and where the administration is at least so gentle: it is impossible they could chuse any other constitution, without changing to their loss.

Fidelity to a present establishment is indeed the principal means to defend is from a foreign enemy; but without other qualifications, will not prevent corruptions from within; and states are more often ruined by these than the other.

To conclude: Whether the proposals I have offered towards a reformation, be such as are most prudent and convenient, may probably be a question: but it is none at all, whether some reformation be absolutely necessary; because the nature of things is such, that if abuses be not remedied, they will certainly increase, nor ever stop till they end in a subversion of a commonwealth. As there must always of necessity be some corruptions, so, in a well instituted state, the executive power will be always contending against them, by *reducing things* (as Machiavel speaks) *to their first principles*, never letting abuses grow inveterate, or multiply so far that it will be hard to find remedies, and perhaps impossible to apply them. As he that would keep his house in repair, must attend every little breach or flaw, and supply it immediately, else time alone will

bring all to ruin ; how much more the common accidents of storms and rain ? He must live in perpetual danger of his house falling about his ears ; and will find it cheaper to throw it quite down, and build it again from the ground, perhaps upon a new foundation, or at least in a new form, which may neither be so safe, nor so convenient as the old.

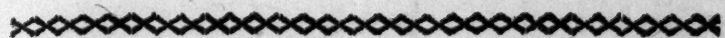
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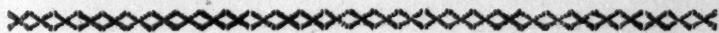
MISCELLANY VII.

O N

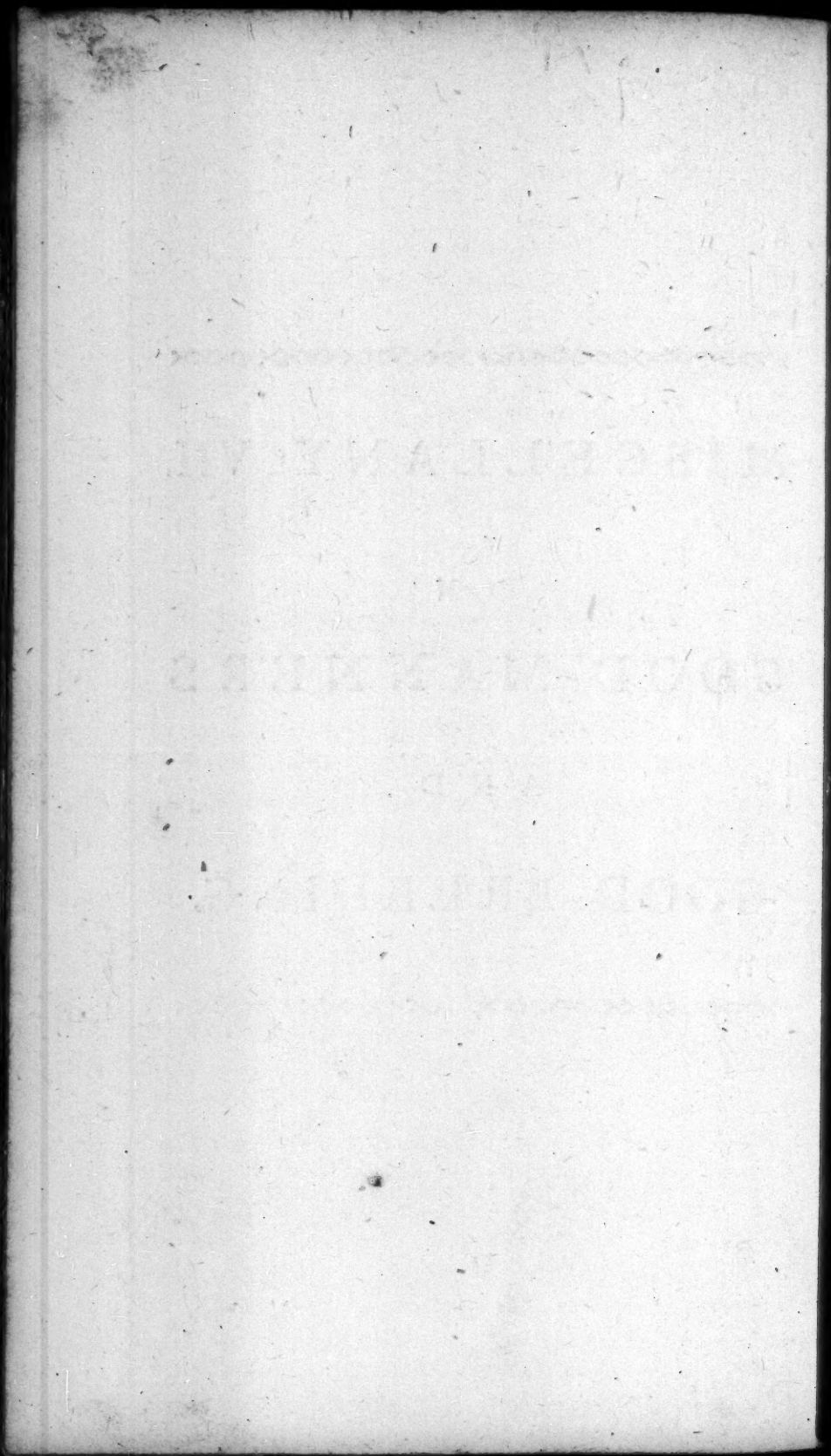
GOOD-MANNERS

A N D

GOOD-BREEDING.



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O N
 G O O D - M A N N E R S
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 G O O D - B R E E D I N G.

GOOD Manners is the art of making those people easy with whom we converse.

Whoever makes the fewest persons uneasy is the best bred in the company.

As the best law is founded upon reason, so are the best manners. And as some lawyers introduced unreasonable things into common law; so likewise many teachers have introduced absurd things into common good-manners.

One principal point of this art is to suit our behaviour to the three several degrees of men; our superiors, our equals, and those below us.

For instance, to press either of the two former to eat or drink is a breach of manners; but a tradesman or a farmer must be thus treated, or else it will be difficult to persuade them that they are welcome.

Pride, ill-nature, and want of sense, are the three great sources of ill-manners; without some one of these defects, no man will behave himself ill for want of experience; or of what, in the language of fools, is called, knowing the world.

I defy any one to assign an incident wherein reason will not direct us what we are to say or do in company, if we are not misled by pride, or ill nature.

Therefore I insist that good sense is the principal foundation of Good manners: But because the former is a gift which very few among mankind are possessed of, therefore all the civilized nations of the world have agreed upon fixing some rules for common behaviour, best suited to their general customs or fancies, as a kind of artificial good-sense to supply the defects of reason. Without which, the *gentlemanly* part of dunces would be perpetually at cuffs, as they seldom fail when they happen to be drunk, or engaged in squabbles about women, or play. And God be thanked, there hardly happeneth a duel in a year, which may not be imputed to one of those three motives, Upon which account, I should be exceedingly sorry to find the legislature make any new laws against the practice of duelling; because the methods are easy,

and many, for a wise man to avoid a quarrel with honour, or engage in it with innocence. And I can discover no political evil in suffering bullies, sharpers, and rakes, to rid the world of each other by a method of their own, where the law hath not been able to find an expedient.

As the common forms of Good-manners were intended for regulating the conduct of those who have weak understandings; so they have been corrupted by the persons for whose use they were contrived. For these people have fallen into a needless and endless way of multiplying ceremonies, which have been extremely troublesome to those who practise them, and insupportable to every body else: insomuch, that wise men are often more uneasy at the over civility of these refiners, than they could possibly be in the conversations of peasants, or mechanics.

The impertinencies of this ceremonial behaviour are no where better seen than at those tables, where ladies preside; who value themselves upon account of their Good-breeding; where a man must reckon upon passing an hour without doing any one thing he hath a mind to; unless he will be so hardy as to break through all the settled decorum of the family. She determineth what he loveth best, and how much he shall eat;

and if the master of the house happeneth to be of the same disposition, he proceedeth in the same tyrannical manner to prescribe in the drinking part: at the same time, you are under the necessity of answering a thousand apologies for your entertainment. And, although a good deal of this humour is pretty well worn off among many people of the best fashion, yet too much of it still remaineth, especially in the country; where an honest gentleman assured me, that having been kept four days, against his will, at a friend's house, with all the circumstances of hiding his boots, locking up the stable, and other contrivances of the like nature; he could not remember from the moment he came into the house, to the moment he left it, any one thing, wherein his inclination was not directly contradicted; as if the whole family had entered into a combination to torment him.

But, besides all this, it would be endless to recount the many foolish and ridiculous accidents I have observed among these unfortunate proselytes to ceremony. I have seen a duchess fairly knocked down by the precipitancy of an officious coxcomb, running to save her the trouble of opening a door. I remember, upon a birth-day, at court, a great lady was utterly desperate by a dish of sauce let fall by a page directly upon her

head dress, and brocade; while she gave a sudden turn to her elbow upon some point of ceremony with the person who sat next her. Monsieur *Buys*, the *Dutch* envoy, whose politicks and manners were much of a size, brought a son with him, about thirteen years old, to a great table at court. The boy, and his father, whatever they put on their plates, they first offered round in order, to every person in the company; so that we could not get a minute's quiet during the whole dinner. At last, their two plates happened to encounter, and with so much violence, that being china, they broke in twenty pieces; and stained half the company with wet sweet-meats and cream.

There is a pedantry in manners, as in all arts and sciences; and sometimes in trades. Pedantry is properly the over rating any kind of knowledge we pretend to. And, if that kind of knowledge be a trifle in itself, the pedantry is the greater. For which reason, I look upon fidlers, dancing masters, heralds, masters of the ceremony, &c. to be greater pedants, than *Lipsius*, or the elder *Scaliger*. With these kind of pedants, the court, while I knew it, was always plentifully stocked: I mean from the gentleman-usher (at least) inclusive, downward to the gentleman porter; who are, generally speaking, the most in-

significant race of people that this island can afford, and with the smallest tincture of good manners; which is the only trade they profess. For being wholly illiterate, and conversing chiefly with each other, they reduce the whole system of breeding within the forms and circles of their several offices: and, as they are below the notice of ministers, they live and die in court under all revolutions, with great obsequiousness to those who are in any degree of credit or favour, and with rudeness or insolence to every body else. From whence I have long concluded, that good manners are not a plant of the court growth: for, if they were, those people who have understandings directly of a level for such acquirements, and who have served such long apprenticeships to nothing else, would certainly have picked them up. For, as to the great officers who attend the prince's person or councils, or preside in his family, they are a transient body, who have no better a title to good-manners, than their neighbours, nor will probably have recourse to gentlemen-ushers for instruction. So, that I know little to be learned at court upon this head, except in the material circumstance of dress; wherein the authority of the maids of honour must indeed be allowed to be almost equal to that of a favourite actress.

I remember a passage my lord Bolingbroke told me, that going to receive prince Eugene of Savoy at his landing, in order to conduct him immediately to the queen, the prince said, he was much concerned that he could not see her majesty that night; for monsieur Hoffman (who was then by) had assured his highness that he could not be admitted into her presence with a tied-up periwig: that his equipage was not arrived, and that he had endeavoured in vain to borrow a long one among all his valets and pages. My lord turned the matter to a jest, and brought the prince to her majesty; for which he was highly censured by the whole tribe of gentlemen-ushers; among whom monsieur Hoffman, an old dull resident of the emperor's, had picked up this material point of ceremony; and which, I believe, was the best lesson he had learned in five and twenty years residence.

I make a difference between good manners and good breeding; although, in order to vary my expression, I am sometimes forced to confound them. By the first, I only understand the art of remembering, and applying certain settled forms of general behaviour. But good-breeding is of a much larger extent; for besides an uncommon degree of literature sufficient to qualify a gentleman for reading a play, or a po-

litical pamphlet, it taketh in a great compass of knowlege; no less than that of dancing, fighting, gaming, making the circle of Italy, riding the great horse, and speaking French; not to mention some other secondary, or subaltern accomplishments, which are more easily acquired; so, that the difference between good-breeding, and good-manners, lieth in this; that the former cannot be attained to by the best understandings, without study and labour; whereas a tolerable degree of reason will instruct us in every part of good-manners, without other assistance.

I can think of nothing more useful upon this subject, than to point out some particulars, wherein the very essentials of good-manners are concerned, the neglect or perverting of which, doth very much disturb the good commerce of the world, by introducing a traffic of mutual uneasiness in most companies.

First, a necessary part of good manners, is a punctual observance of time at our own dwellings, or those of others, or at third places; whether upon matter of civility, business, or diversion; which rule, tho' it be a plain dictate of common reason, yet the greatest* minister I ever knew, was the greatest trespasser against it; by which

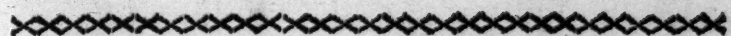
† Robert Harly, earl of Oxford, lord high treasurer to queen Anne.

all his business doubled upon him, and placed him in a continual arrear. Upon which I often used to rally him, as deficient in point of good-manners. I have known more than one ambassador and secretary of state, with a very moderate portion of intellectuals, execute their offices with good success and applause by the mere force of exactness and regularity. If you duly observe time for the service of another, it doubles the obligation; if upon your own account, it would be manifest folly, as well as ingratitude to neglect it. If both are concerned, to make your equal or inferior attend on you, to his own disadvantage, is pride and injustice.

Ignorance of forms cannot properly be stiled ill-manners; because forms are subject to frequent changes; and consequently, being not founded, upon reason, are beneath a wise man's regard. Besides, they vary in every country; and, after a short period of time, very frequently in the same: so, that a man, who travelleth, must be at first a stranger to them in every court through which he passeth; and perhaps, at his return as much a stranger in his own; and after all, they are easier to be remembered, or forgotten, than faces or names.

Indeed among the many impertinencies that superficial young men bring with them from a-

broad, this bigotry of forms is one of the principal, and more predominant than the rest. Who look upon them, not only, as if they were matters capable of admitting of choice, but even as points of importance; and therefore zealous upon all occasions to introduce and propagate the new forms and fashions they have brought back with them: so, that usually speaking, the worst bred person in the company is a young traveller just returned from abroad.



MISCELLANY VIII.

H I N T S

TOWARDS AN

E S S A Y

O N

CONVERSATION.



MISCELLANY

THE

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H I N T S

Towards an ESSAY on

CONVERSATION.

I HAVE observed few obvious subjects to have been so seldom, or at least so slightly handled at this; and, indeed, I know few so difficult to be treated as it ought, nor yet upon which there seemeth so much to be said.

Most things pursued by men for the happiness of public or private life, our wit or folly have so refined, that they seldom subsist but in idea; a true friend, a good marriage, a perfect form of government, with some others, require so many ingredients, so good in their several kinds, and so much niceness in mixing them, that for some thousands of years men have despaired of reducing their schemes to perfection: But, in conversation, it is or might be otherwise; for here we are only to avoid a multitude of errors, which, although a matter of some difficulty, may be in

every man's power, for want of which it remaineth as mere an idea as the other. Therefore it seemeth to me, that the truest way to understand conversation, is to know the faults and errors, to which it is subject, and from thence every man to form maxims to himself whereby it may be regulated, because it requireth few talents to which most men are not born, or at least may not acquire without any great genius or study. For nature hath left every man a capacity of being agreeable, tho' not of shining in company; and there are an hundred men sufficiently qualified for both, who, by a very few faults that they might correct in half an hour, are not so much as tolerable.

I was prompted to write my thoughts upon this subject by mere indignation, to reflect that so useful and innocent a pleasure, so fitted for every period and condition of life, and so much in all men's power, should be so much neglected and abused.

And in this discourse it will be necessary to note those errors that are obvious, as well as others which are seldomer observed, since there are few so obvious or acknowledged, into which most men, some time or other, are not apt to run.

For instance: Nothing is more generally ex-

ploded than the folly of talking too much: yet I rarely remember to have seen five people together, where some one among them hath not been predominant in that kind, to the great constraint and disgust of all the rest. But among such as deal in multitudes of words, none are comparable to the sober deliberate talker, who proceedeth with much thought and caution, maketh his preface, brancheth out into several digressions, findeth a hint that putteth him in mind of another story; which he promiseth to tell you when this is done; cometh back regularly to his subject; cannot readily call to mind some person's name, holdeth his head, complaineth of his memory; the whole company all this while in suspense; at length, says he, it is no matter, and so goes on. And, to crown the business, it perhaps proveth at last a story the company hath heard fifty times before; or, at best, some insipid adventure of the relater.

Another general fault in conversation is, that of those who affect to talk of themselves: Some, without any ceremony, will run over the history of their lives; will relate symptoms and circumstances of them; will enumerate the hardships and injustice they have suffered in court, in parliament, in love, or in law. Others are more dexterous, and with great art will ly

on the watch to hook in their own praise: They will call a witness to remember they always foretold what would happen in such a case, but none would believe them; they advised such a man from the beginning, and told him the consequences just as they happened; but he would have his own way. Others make a vanity of telling their faults: they are the strangest men in the world; they cannot dissemble: they own it is a folly; they have lost abundance of advantages by it; but, if you would give them the world, they cannot help it; there is something in their nature that abhors insincerity and constraint; with many other unsufferable topics of the same altitude.

Of such mighty importance every man is to himself, and ready to think he is so to others; without once making this easy and obvious reflection, that his affairs can have no more weight with other men, than their's have with him; and how little that is, he is sensible enough.

Where company hath met, I often have observed two persons discover by some accident, that they were bred together at the same school or university, after which the rest are condemned to silence, and to listen while these two are refreshing each other's memory with the arch tricks and passages of themselves and their comrades.

I know a great officer of the army, who will sit for some time with a supercilious and impatient silence, full of anger and contempt for those who are talking; at length of a sudden demand audience; decide the matter in a short dogmatical way; then withdraw within himself again, and vouchsafe to talk no more, until his spirits circulate again to the same point.

There are some faults in conversation, which none are so subject to as the men of wit, nor ever so much as when they are with each other. If they have opened their mouths, without endeavouring to say a witty thing they think it is so many words lost: It is a torment to the hearers, as much as to themselves, to see them upon the rack for invention, and in perpetual constraint, with so little success. They must do something extraordinary, in order to acquit themselves, and answer their character, else the standers-by may be disappointed and be apt to think them only like the rest of mortals. I have known two men of wit industriously brought together, in order to entertain the company, where they have made a very ridiculous figure, and provided all the mirth at their own expence.

I know a man of wit, who is never easy but where he can be allowed to dictate and preside; he neither expecteth to be informed or entertain-

ed, but to display his own talents. His business is to be good company, and not good conversation; and, therefore, he chuseth to frequent those who are content to listen, and profess themselves his admirers. And, indeed, the worst conversation I ever remember to have heard in my life, was that at *Will's* coffee house, where the wits (as they were called) used formerly to assemble; that is to say, five or six men, who had writ plays, or at least prologues, or had share in a miscellany, came thither, and entertained one another with their trifling composures in so important an air, as if they had been the noblest efforts of human nature, or that the fate of kingdoms depended on them; and they were usually attended with an humble audience of young students from the Inns of courts, or the universities, who, at due distance, listened to these oracles, and returned home with great contempt for their law and philosophy, their heads filled with trash, under the name of politeness, criticism, and belles lettres.

By these means the poets, for many years past, were all over-run with pedantry. For, as I take it, the word is not properly used; because pedantry is the too frequent or unseasonable obtruding our own knowlege in common discourse, and placing too great a value upon it; by which

definition, men of the court or the army may be as guilty of pedantry as a philosopher or a divine; and it is the same vice in women, when they are over-copious upon the subject of their petticoats, or their fans, or their china. For which reason, although it be a piece of prudence, as well as good manners, to put men upon talking on subjects they are best versed in, yet that is a liberty a wise man could hardly take; because, beside the imputation of pedantry, it is what he would never improve by.

This great town is usually provided with some player, mimick, or buffoon, who hath a general reception at the good tables; familiar and domestic with persons of the first quality, and usually sent for at every meeting to divert the company; against which I have no objection. You go there as to a farce or a puppet-show; your business is only to laugh in season, either out of inclination or civility, while this merry companion is acting his part. It is a business he hath undertaken, and we are to suppose he is paid for his day's work. I only quarrel, when in select and private meetings, where men of learning are invited to pass an evening, this jester should be admitted to run over his circle of tricks, and make the whole company unfit for any

other conversation, besides the indignity of confounding mens talents at so shameful a rate.

Raillery is the finest part of conversation; but as it is our usual custom to counterfeit and adulterate whatever is too dear for us, so we have done with this, and turned it all into what is generally called repartee, or being smart; just as when an expensive fashion cometh up, those who are not able to reach it content themselves with some paltry imitation. It now passeth for raillery to run a man down in discourse, to put him out of countenance, and make him ridiculous, sometimes to expose the defects of his person or understanding; on all which occasions he is obliged not to be angry, to avoid the imputation of not being able to take a jest. It is admirable to observe one, who is dextrous at this art, singling out a weak adversary, getting the laugh on his side, and then carrying all before him. The French, from whom we borrow the word, have a quite different idea of the thing, and so had we in the politer age of our fathers. Raillery was, to say something that at first appeared a reproach or reflexion, but, by some turn of wit unexpected and surprising, ended always in a compliment, and to the advantage of the person it was addressed to. And surely one of the best rules in conversation is, never to

say a thing which any of the company can reasonably wish we had rather left unsaid; nor can there any thing be well more contrary to the ends for which people meet together, than to part unsatisfied with each other or themselves.

There are two faults in conversation which appear very different, yet arise from the same root, and are equally blameable; I mean, an impatience to interrupt others, and the uneasiness of being interrupted ourselves. The two chief ends of conversation are, to entertain and improve those we are among, or to receive those benefits ourselves; which whoever will consider, cannot easily run into either of those two errors; because when any man speaketh in company, it is to be supposed he doth it for his hearer's sake, and not his own; so that common discretion will teach us not to force their attention, if they are not willing to lend it; nor, on the other side, to interrupt him who is in possession, because that is in the grossest manner to give the preference to our good sense.

There are some people, whose good manners will not suffer them to interrupt you; but, what is almost as bad, will discover abundance of impatience, and ly upon the watch until you have done, because they have started something in their own thoughts which they long to be deli-

vered of. Mean time, they are so far from regarding what passes, that their imaginations are wholly turned upon what they have in reserve, for fear it should slip out of their memory; and thus they confine their invention, which might otherwise range over a hundred things full as good, and that might be much more naturally introduced.

There is a sort of rude familiarity, which some people, by practising among their intimates, have introduced into their general conversation, and would have it pass for innocent freedom or humour, which is a dangerous experiment in our northern climate, where all the little decorum and politeness we have are purely forced by art, and are so ready to lapse into barbarity. This, among the Romans, was the raillery of slaves, of which we have many instances in Plautus. It seemeth to have been introduced among us by Cromwell, who, by preferring the scum of the people, made it a court-entertainment, of which I have heard many particulars: and, considering all things were turned upside down, it was reasonable and judicious: although it was a piece of policy found out to ridicule a point of honour in the other extreme, when the smallest word misplaced among gentlemen ended in a duel.

There are some men excellent at telling a story,

and provided with a plentiful stock of them, which they can draw out upon occasion in all companies; and, considering low conversation runs now among us, it is not altogether a contemptible talent; however, it is subject to two unavoidable defects; frequent repetition, and being soon exhausted; so that whoever valueth this gift in himself, hath need of a good memory, and ought frequently to shift his company, that he may not discover the weakness of his fund; for those who are thus endowed have seldom any other revenue but live upon the main stock.

Great speakers in public, are seldom agreeable in private conversation, whether their faculty be natural, or acquired by practice and often venturing. Natural elocution, although it may seem a paradox, usually springeth from a barrenness of invention and of words, by which men who have only one stock of notions upon every subject, and one set of phrases to express them in, they swim upon the superficies, and offer themselves on every occasion; therefore, men of much learning, and who know the compass of a language, are generally the worst talkers on a sudden, until much practice hath inured and emboldened them; because they are confounded with plenty of matter, variety of notions, and

of words, which they cannot readily chuse, but are perplexed and entangled by too great a choice, which is no disadvantage in private conversation; where, on the other side, the talent of haranguing is, of all others, most insupportable.

Nothing hath spoiled men more for conversation, than the character of being wits; to support which, they never fail of encouraging a number of followers and admirers, who list themselves in their service, wherein they find their accounts on both sides by pleasing their vanity. This hath given the former such an air of superiority, and made the latter so pragmatical, that neither of them are well to be endured. I say nothing here of the itch of dispute and contradiction, telling of lies, or of those who are troubled with the disease called the wandering of the thoughts, that they are never present in mind at what passeth in discourse; for whoever labours under any of these possessions, is as unfit for conversation as mad-men in Bedlam.

I think I have gone over most of the errors in conversation that have fallen under my notice or memory, except some that are merely personal, and others too gross to need exploding; such as lewd or prophane talk; but, I pretend only to treat the errors of conversation in general, and not the several subjects of discourse, which

would be infinite. Thus we see how human nature is most debased, by the abuse of that faculty, which is held the great distinction between men and brutes; and how little advantage we make of that which might be the greatest, the most lasting, and the most innocent, as well as useful pleasure of life: In default of which, we are forced to take up with those poor amusements of dress and visiting, or the more pernicious ones of play, drink, and vicious amours, whereby the nobility and gentry of both sexes are entirely corrupted both in body and mind, and have lost all notions of love, honour, friendship and generosity; which, under the name of fopperies, have been for some time laughed out of doors.

This degeneracy of conversation, with the pernicious consequences thereof upon our humours and dispositions, hath been owing, among other causes, to the custom arisen, for some time past, of excluding women from any share in our society, further than in parties at play, or dancing, or in the pursuit of an amour. I take the highest period of politeness in England (and it is of the same date in France) to have been the peaceable part of King Charles the first's reign; and from what we read of those times, as well as from the accounts I have formerly met with from some who lived in that court, the methods

then used for raising and cultivating conversation, were altogether different from ours: several ladies, whom we find celebrated by the poets of that age, had assemblies at their houses, where persons of the best understanding, and of both sexes, met to pass the evenings in discoursing upon whatever agreeable subjects were occasionally started; and although we are apt to ridicule the sublime Platonic notions they had, or personated in love and friendship, I conceive their refinements were grounded upon reason, and that a little grain of the romance is no ill ingredient to preserve and exalt the dignity of human nature, without which it is apt to degenerate into every thing that is sordid, vicious and low. If there were no other use in the conversation of ladies, it is sufficient that it would lay a restraint upon those odious topics of immodesty and indecencies, into which the rudeness of our northern genius is so apt to fall. And, therefore, it is observable in those sprightly gentlemen about the town, who are so very dexterous at entertaining a vizard mask in the park or the play-house, that, in the company of ladies of virtue and honour, they are silent and disconcerted, and out of their element.

There are some people who think they sufficiently acquit themselves and entertain their com-

pany with relating of facts of no consequence, nor at all out of the road of such common incidents as happen every day; and this I have observed more frequently among the Scots than any other nation, who are very careful not to omit the minutest circumstances of time or place; which kind of discourse, if it were not a little relieved by the uncouth terms and phrases, as well as accent and gesture peculiar to that country, would be hardly tolerable. It is not a fault in company to talk much; but to continue it long is certainly one: for, if the majority of those who are got together be naturally silent or cautious, the conversation will flag, unless it be often renewed by one among them, who can start new subjects, provided he doth not dwell upon them, but leaveth room for answers and replies.

T H E E N D.

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THE END

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